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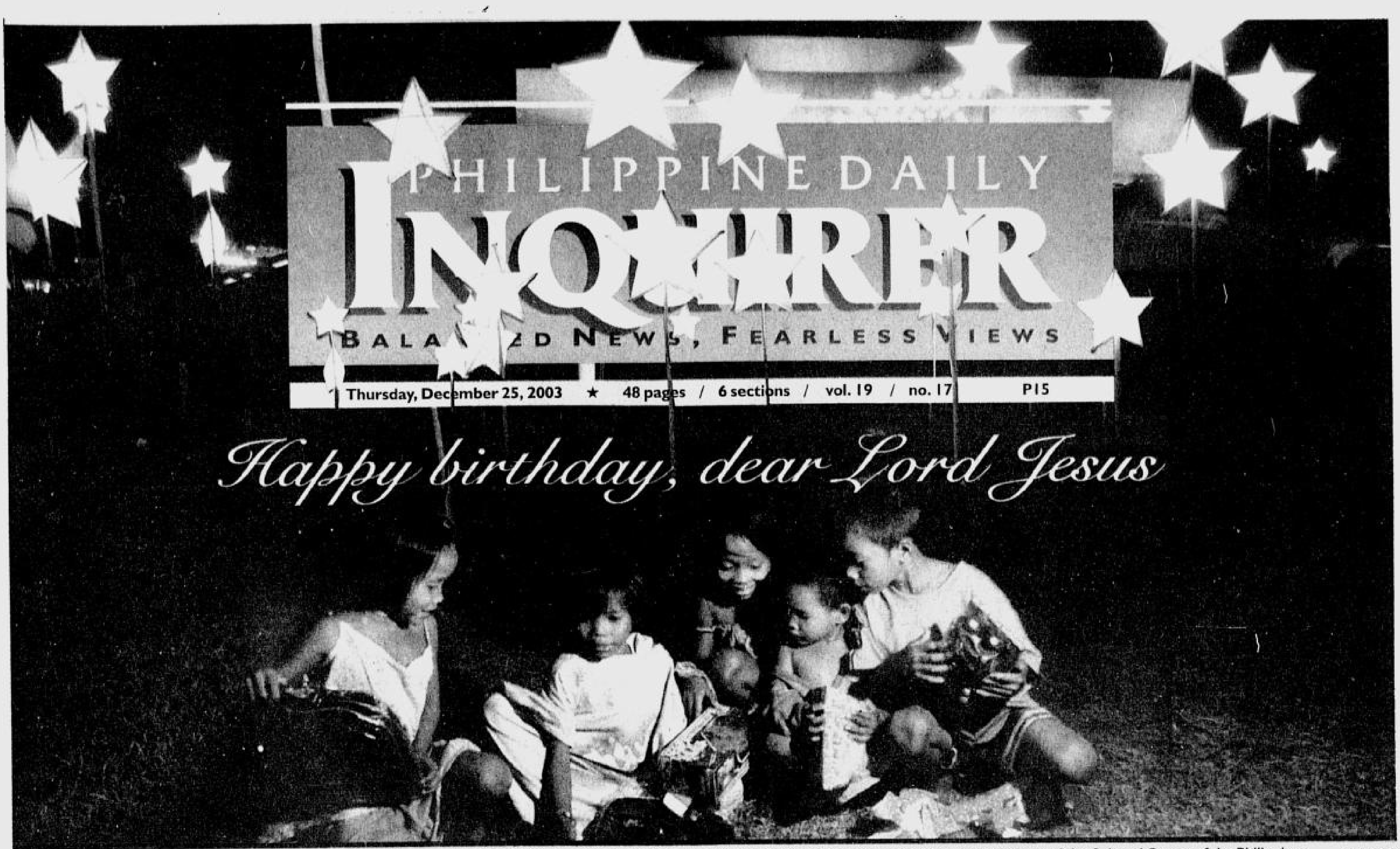

Happy birthday, dear Lord Jesus

MANILA celebrates the season of spreading joy to those who have very little in life. Five street children open their Christmas presents from the INQUIRER in front of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. BOY CABRIDO

Sandiganbayan under fire

Groups lambast ruling on Erap trip

**By Carlito Pablo
Juliet Labog-Javellana
and Armand N. Nocum**

A POLITICAL deal, a double standard for clemency that favors the rich, and a ruling that allows a person charged with capital offense to escape.

These were the reactions of legislators, militant groups and a presidential aspirant to the Sandiganbayan ruling allowing deposed President Joseph Estrada, who is charged with plunder, to leave in the first week of January for the United States for knee surgery.

Estrada may even get a bonus: a visit from President Macapagal-Arroyo before he leaves for the United States. The President's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said it would not be "far-fetched" if she would drop by to personally check on Estrada.

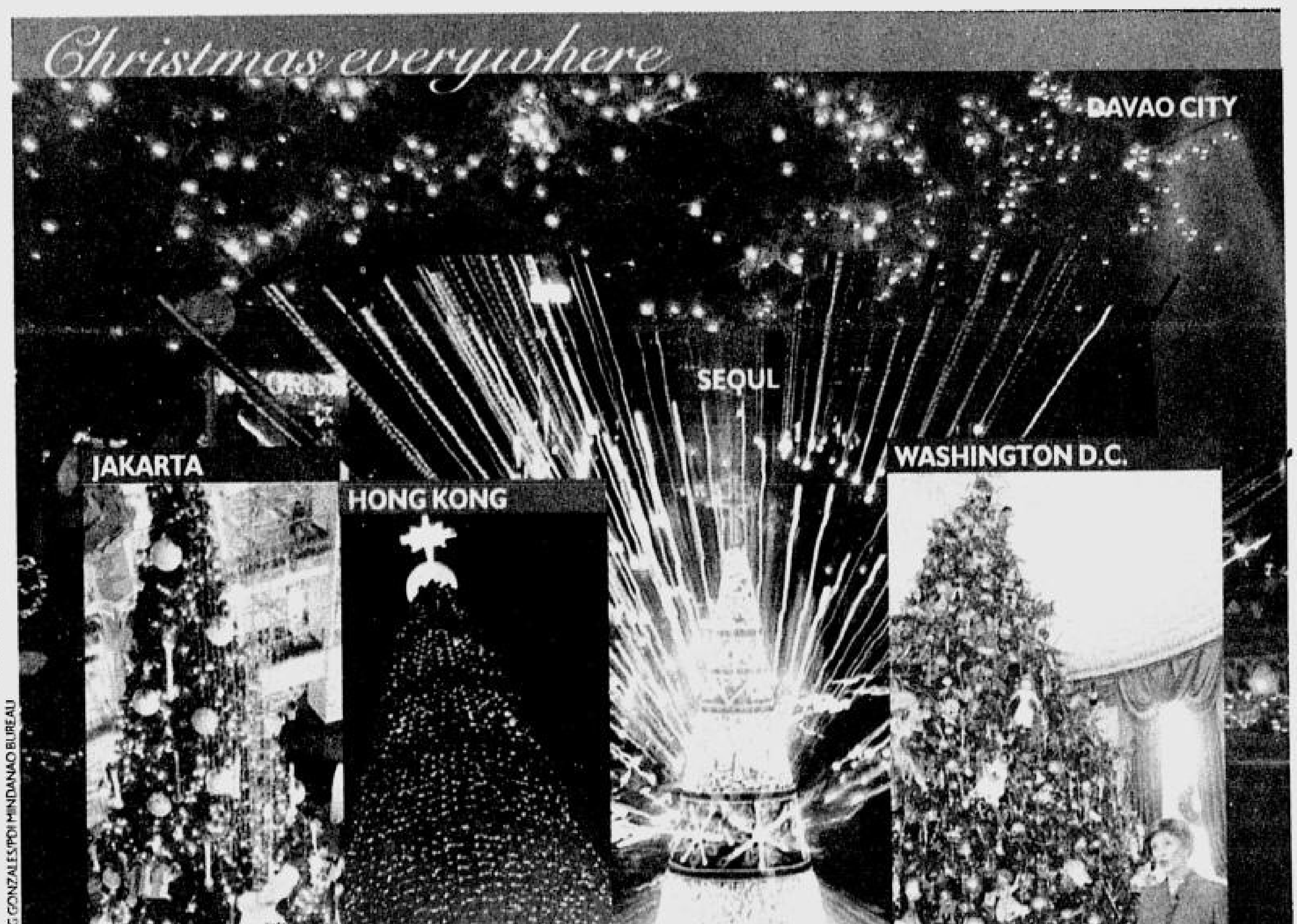
Among the conditions set by the court for Estrada's travel is that he must be accompanied by four policemen from the Philippines, that he post a P1-million travel bond, and that he can only travel within the United States.

The Sandiganbayan did not provide for this Christmas reunion for Estrada who is detained in a camp in Rizal.

Because the ruling is not yet final, government and private prose-

SANDIGANBAYAN/ A4

Christmas everywhere



AFP/BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

MONTAGE LARIBA

A 21-meter Christmas tree is displayed at a shopping mall in Jakarta for the year-end festivities. REUTERS

A tall Christmas tree decorated with lights stands in downtown Hong Kong as part of festivities in the territory. AP

A 24-meter Christmas tree glows in front of City Hall in downtown Seoul. In the background are the lights decorating Osmeña Park in Davao City. AFP

US First Lady Laura Bush presents the Christmas tree in the Blue Room during a preview of the White House holiday decorations in Washington. AP

PR people treat VIPs in hospital

By Volt Contreras

AFTER years of "wining and dining" all sorts of patrons in business, politics and the media, a group of public relations practitioners thought it was time they played generous hosts to a different set of VIPs this Christmas.

The officers of the Public Relations Society of the Philippines decided to cancel its traditional Christmas party and threw one instead for the "Very Important Patients" at the children's ward of the Philippine Orthopedic Hospital (POC) on Tuesday afternoon.

"After all the entertaining, lobbying and networking we've done the whole year, we chose to end it by doing this for the kids," said PRSP president Winston Marbella. "And I can say this is the most satisfying activity we've done."

The gesture brought to tears Irene Latag, 14, now bald from chemotherapy and whose battle with bone cancer had forced the am-

PR PEOPLE/ A4

From street kid to top policeman

By Connie E. Fernandez
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—He was a typical *batang yagit* who loathed policemen for chasing him off the streets.

He used to dive off the Cebu harbor for a few centavos thrown into the water by passengers of arriving vessels. If he was not selling ice candy, he was rummaging through trash to look for leftover food or saleable bottles and cans.

Now, Egmedio Felisan Jr. has become what he used to hate—a policeman. And he is not just an ordinary man with the badge.

Police Officer 3 Felisan, or Bill to his friends, has found his calling in handling the needs of the about 40 wards at the Community Scouts and Youth Guidance Center (CSYGC) at the North Reclamation Area where he works as the administration and operations officer.

Bill, 35, is the center's pioneering graduate, as he was among the first picked up by police in 1981 when it was put up to provide shelter for children in conflict with law.

FROM STREET/ A6

Search continues for missing boat passengers

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Commodore Constancio Jardiniano, chief of Naval Forces West, yesterday said there was no trace of six people who were earlier spotted adrift near the Malaysian waters by an Air Force reconnaissance plane.

The six are believed to have been among the 75 passengers and crew members of the ML Pia-ry that sank in stormy seas off Palawan on Sunday. Twenty of the passengers were rescued on Monday night.

Jardiniano said the Navy had also received unconfirmed reports that 28 passengers and crew members of the ill-fated Pia-ry had been sighted on the shores of Malaysia's Banguey Island off the northern tip of Borneo.

He said five of the six people, who were spotted at 2 p.m. Tuesday clinging to the debris of the wooden-hulled Pia-ry in rough seas near Fearless Shoal, waved to the crew of the OV Bronco plane. One of the six appeared motionless.

The plane dropped water and food to the six, while several Navy and Coast Guard rescue vessels rushed to the site.

Jardiniano said the plane returned to the site on Wednesday morning, but the six were no longer there. Rescue vessels also failed to reach the area because of

SEARCH/ A6

Celebrate despite grief, Leyte victims urged

**By Joey A. Gabieta
and Jhunnex Napallacan**
PDI Visayas Bureau

SAN FRANCISCO, Southern Leyte—The bereaved people of Barangay Punta should find it in their hearts to celebrate the birth of Christ despite their grief, according to the co-parish priest of this town.

Fr. Joselito Catubig told the INQUIRER that he understood the feelings of the survivors of the Dec. 19 landslides and flash flood. But he said: "The tragedy is not a reason for the people not to celebrate Christmas. [They] should in fact be grateful that they managed to escape the horrible tragedy."

Parish priest Edmund Resus aired the same view, saying that despite the tragedy, "Christmas is an occasion that we should always celebrate" because of the Savior's birth.

Resus was to say Mass at the parish church at 3 p.m. yesterday in memory of the 103 persons who died in the landslides.

CELEBRATE/ A6

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao including Palawan will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms becoming widespread rains over the southern Mindanao. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rains.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/12/25/03

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	**Roxas**	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	**Cebu**	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	**Tacloban**	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	**Gen. Santos**	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	**Zamboanga**	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	**Cagayan de Oro**	Widespread Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	**Davao**	Widespread Rains

Lacson may need new party

**By Carlito Pablo
and Christine O. Avendaño**

PRESIDENTIAL aspirant Sen. Panfilo Lacson may have to scout around for a political party outside of the fractured Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino to carry his 2004 bid.

LDP president and Sen. Edgardo Angara is moving in two directions before the Commission on Elections to block Lacson's attempt to use the banner of the country's biggest opposition party.

Rep. Bellaflor Angara-Castillo (LDP, Aurora) said her brother has asked the Comelec "to uphold his sole authority to nominate the standard-bearer of the LDP."

She said he also filed a separate manifestation seeking the accreditation of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, which is backing Fernando Poe Jr., as the "main opposition coalition."

The KNP consists of Angara's LDP wing, deposed President Joseph Estrada's Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino, and the PDP-Laban.

Lacson's bid is supported by a separate LDP wing led by Rep. Agapito Aquino (Makati), the party's secretary general.

The Comelec recognizes the LDP as one of the country's major political parties. A major party is entitled to a copy of the poll body's official certificate of canvass. Minor parties have to rely on their own count.

On Tuesday, Aquino said Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos advised the two factions to come to terms, or else Poe and Lacson would be accredited as independent candidates.

Yesterday Angara-Castillo said her brother had secured the support of regional LDP leaders—meaning, majority of the party. "The Comelec may have no choice but to uphold (his) petitions," she said. This would result in both the KNP and LDP officially carrying Poe.

Aquino has repeatedly asserted that he and not Angara has the authority to certify the official LPD bets.

Lacson's allies at the House earlier expressed hope that he and Poe might still get to settle differences through Estrada's intercession. As the prospects grew dim, however, Lacson's camp the other day announced a provisional list of senatorial candidates led by socialite Rosemarie "Baby" Arenas.

Angelito Banayo, the senator's political adviser, said Lacson would file his certificate of candidacy before the Commission on Elections at 9 a.m. on Dec. 29.

Aside from Arenas, Banayo said, they were eyeing four others who have expressed interest in running for senator under Lacson: House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla, former immigration chief Rufus Rodriguez, former Ambassador to Egypt Makabangkit Lanto, and Tagaytay City Mayor Francis Tolentino.

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MILF asks OIC to set early meet

PARANG, Maguindanao—The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) has asked the influential Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to set early next year a tripartite meeting to evaluate the final peace agreement that the former rebel group entered with the Philippine government seven years ago.

The OIC brokered the pact signed on Sept. 2, 1996.

In a telephone interview, Cotabato City mayor and concurrent MNLF secretary general Muslimin Sema said the request was contained in a resolution passed during a just-concluded three-day meeting in Davao City.

Sema said the group appealed to the OIC because the government of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)—which covers the provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Tawi-tawi, Sulu, Basilan and Marawi City—had done nothing to alleviate the problems of Muslim communities in the South.

"There is something lacking in the lives of our people," Sema said. "The ARMM has failed to deliver basic services." *Rosa-May V. de Guzman, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Metro placed on red alert

By TJ Burgonio

MILITARY officials have placed the National Capital Region Command (NCRC) on red alert during the holidays to thwart possible attacks on Metro Manila by terrorist groups, including local communist rebels.

The rest of the country remains on white alert.

Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero, military chief information officer, told reporters that the NCRC, revived in November to foil terror strikes and another rumored uprising by disgruntled soldiers, was "tasked to react to any eventuality."

The command, headed by Maj. Gen. Alberto Braganza, is composed of at least 2,000 specially-trained personnel from the elite Light Reaction Company, Marines and the Army's 80th Infantry Brigade.

Lucero said there have been no terror plots uncovered, but the military was not discounting the possibility that New People's Army guerrillas would launch attacks tomorrow to mark the 35th anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Malacañang declared a 27-day Somo with the NPA on Dec. 10 as a goodwill gesture, and the rebel group reciprocated with a 15-day ceasefire on Dec. 20.

RP to restrict US beef imports

THE PHILIPPINES will block the importation of some US beef products but will not impose a blanket ban after the detection of a case of mad cow disease in America, agriculture officials said yesterday.

"We just want to reassure the consuming public that our meat here is safe," Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo said at a press conference.

The United States disclosed Tuesday a single cow believed infected with mad cow disease had been found in the northwestern state of Washington.

Lorenzo said none of the beef in the Philippines came from the place where the infected animal was detected.

"We believe they (US authorities) are taking all the necessary procedures," Lorenzo said.

He said there was no need for a blanket ban on US beef but added that quarantine officials would likely restrict the importation of certain kinds of American beef products, particularly meat that had not been de-boned.

Agriculture Undersecretary Cesar Drilon said the Philippines would restrict importation of meat with bones as well as offal and internal organs. The mad cow disease is believed to be spread to humans through the consumption of brains and the spine of infected animals. *AFP*

Nene: FPJ unstoppable; GMA beyond redemption

By Michael Lim Ubac

FPJ is unstoppable.

Thus said opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. as he predicted yesterday that movie king Fernando Poe Jr. would definitely end up in Malacañang through the support of a united opposition.

By united, he meant a "united opposition minus Senator (Panfilo) Lacson."

Lacson said he was bent on gunning for the presidency after Sen. Edgardo Angara orchestrated the selection of Poe on Dec. 10 through a process which, he said, was neither fair nor honest.

Pimentel said he was no longer keen on seeking the presidency to ensure a common standard-bearer for the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

But the actor had offered him to be his running mate.

"FPJ still wants me to run for VP. I told him, '*Wag na*,'" said Pimentel, noting that an FPJ-Sen. Loren Legarda tandem is already a done deal.

A fourth presidential aspirant of the opposition—Sen. Gregorio Honasan—has lost interest, and is now seeking a House seat in Sorsogon.

Pimentel, a veteran politician since the Marcos regime, predicted that President Macapagal-Arroyo would suffer a humiliating defeat in the May elections.

"GMA's reelection bid is in the doldrums. She's beyond redemption," he added.

Pimentel said it was too late to save her presidency, stressing that anything that the President touched on from this day until election time would be interpreted as pure politicking.

He explained that the victory of Poe in the presidential race was not dependent on the support of a single person in the opposition.

"It is dependent on an overwhelming backing of the people, the manifestations of which are already visible—overwhelming endorsement of Poe coming from all over the nation."

Platform

Pimentel disclosed that he privately met Poe on Dec. 18 to discuss Freedom, which stands for the topics of his proposed platform: federalism, economic, education, debt, overseas Filipinos and Mindanao.

"It is understood that FREEDOM does not limit the FPJ program of action that his group may craft for the good of the people. On federalism, FPJ suggested that it be submitted as a part of the proposal to amend the Constitution so that it could be explained, discussed and dissected more fully for the benefit of the people," said Pimentel.

He said Poe was amenable to adopt his platform "subject to refinement by FPJ's platform committee."

Muslims going for GMA–Datumanong

By Philip C. Tubeza

FERNANDO Poe Jr. may be popular among the Muslims, but President Macapagal-Arroyo will still get their vote in next year's polls, according to former Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong.

Most of the country's Muslim leaders earlier vowed to support the President's bid for a term extension, Datumanong noted, "and Muslims follow their leaders."

Muslims, largely concentrated in Mindanao, account for five percent of the country's estimated 80 million population, which is predominantly Roman Catholic.

Datumanong is one of the vice-presidents of the ruling party Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, and was the only Muslim in Mrs. Arroyo's Cabinet. He resigned Tuesday to run for congressman in the second district of Maguindanao, his home province.

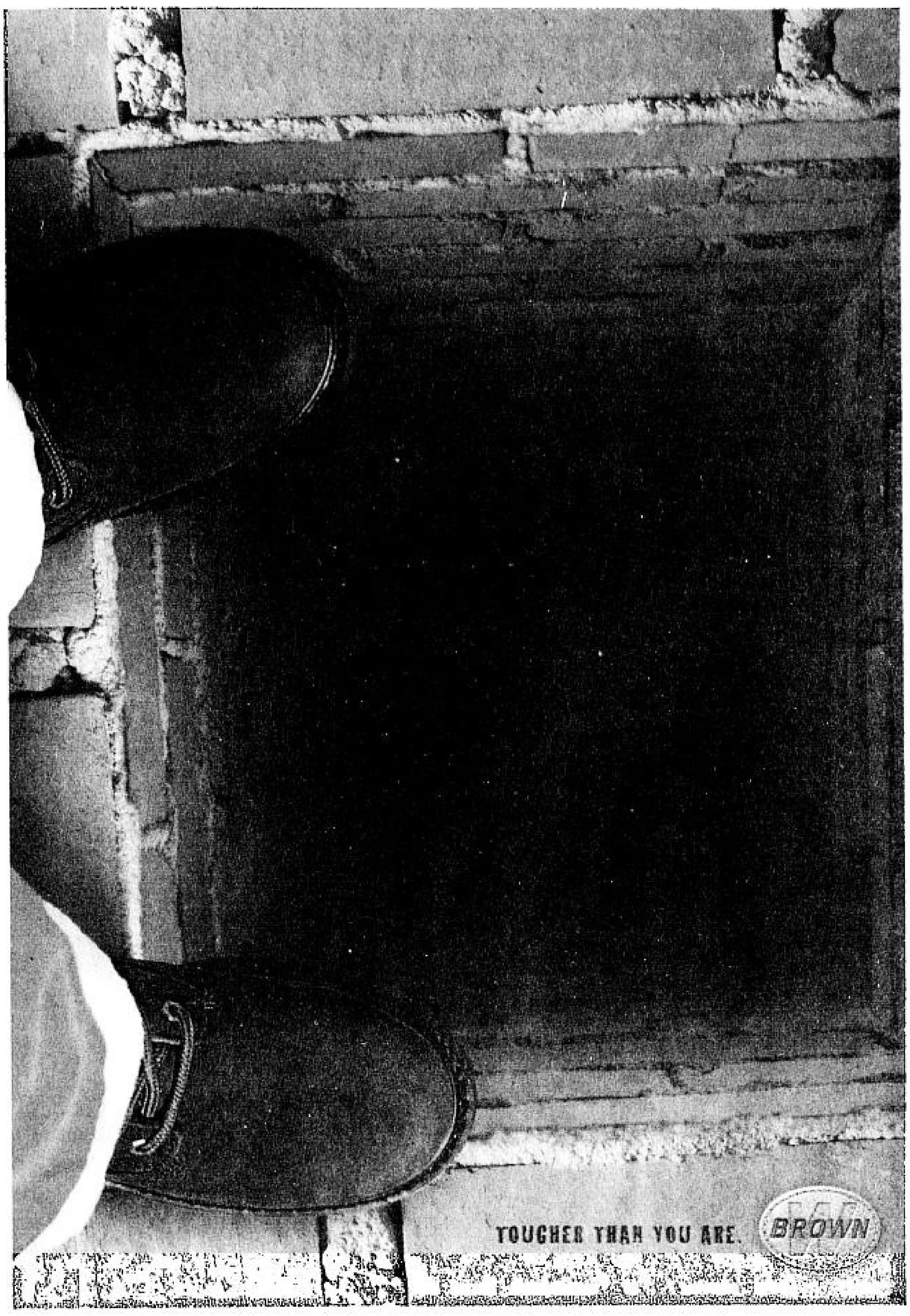
Poe was popular among the Muslims only as an actor, he said. "As a (presidential) candidate, it's a different story."

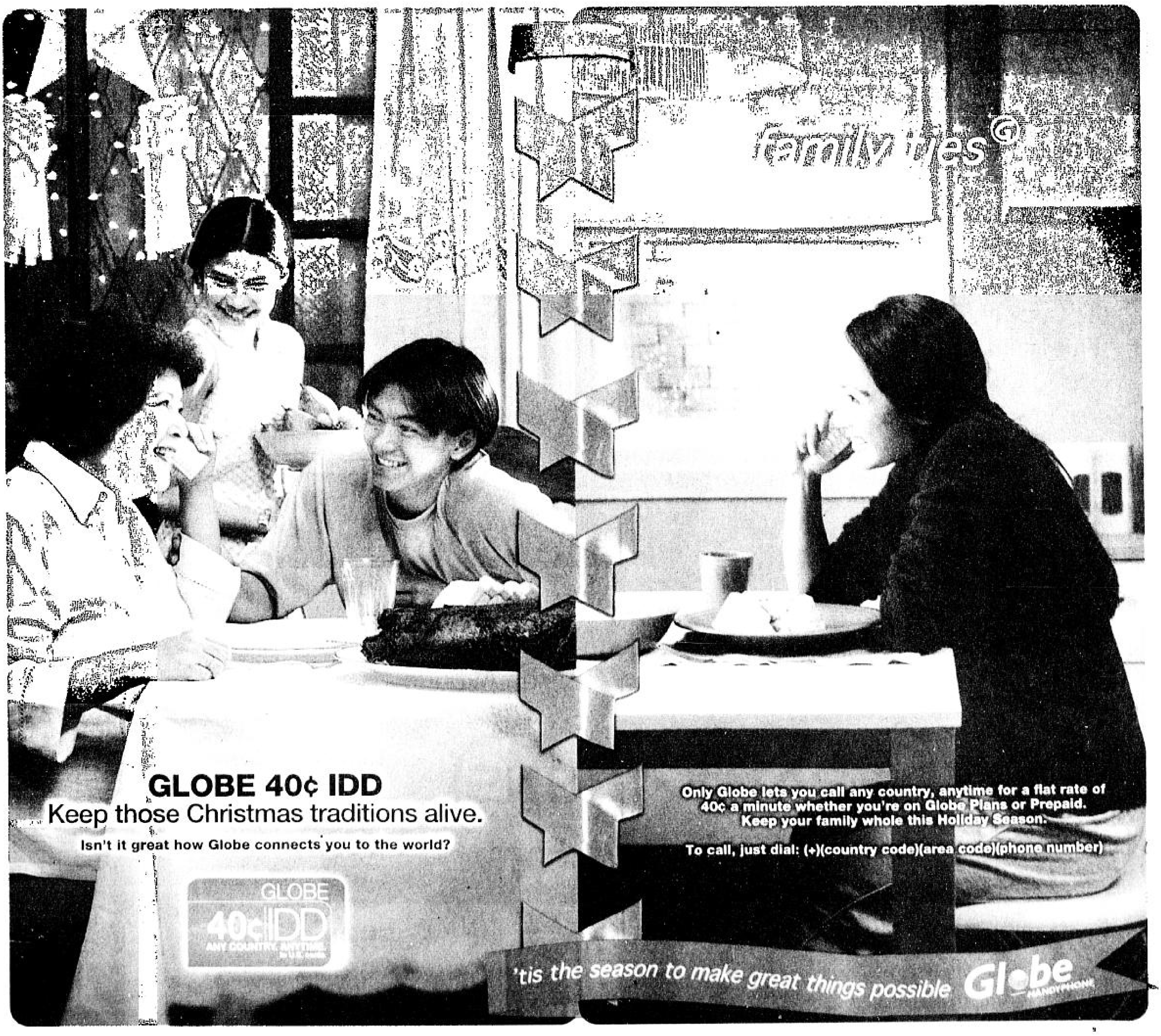
He added that the squabbling between Poe and Sen. Panfilo Lacson, another presidential hopeful from the opposition, would certainly help the administration.

Ms Macapagal had the support of six governors in Mindanao, Datumanong said. He specified the provincial leaders of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte, Sulu, Basilan, and Tawi-Tawi.

Muslims were grateful that the President had pushed for "so much development" in the region and promoted their "religious welfare," Datumanong stressed, citing Ms Macapagal's declaration of the Muslim feast of Eid-al-Fitr as a national holiday.

The administration has back in its fold many former Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) leaders who broke away from ex-MNLF chief Nur Misuari. Now it is pursuing peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the remaining major Muslim secessionist group.





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Sandiganbayan under fire

From page A1

cutors are set to fight tooth and nail to stop the Sandiganbayan from implementing its decision. But the president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and the head of the Catholic charismatic group El Shaddai are supporting the anti-graft court decision, saying it gives new meaning to the spirit of Christmas.

Two lawmakers—one a critic and the other an ally of Estrada—yesterday said the Sandiganbayan ruling had the May presidential election written all over it to favor the the candidacy of Ms Macapagal.

Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales (Akbayan) said the Sandiganbayan ruling smacked of a "political deal" between Ms Macapagal and Estrada.

"It [ruling] aims to blunt the edge of an FPJ candidacy," Rosales said in a phone interview, referring to actor Fernando Poe Jr., whom Estrada had earlier endorsed as the opposition's standard-bearer.

Rosales pointed out that the ruling would appease Estrada's supporters and "that's the link to the FPJ candidacy."

She said the court was "pressured" by Malacañang into granting Estrada his wish to leave for the United States.

"Probably if Erap will be getting more concessions from the Macapagal administration, then he would see that FPJ is no longer relevant to his needs," she said.

Estrada's party mate Rep. Didagen Dilangalen (Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino, Maguindanao) noted that while the move to allow Estrada to undergo surgery in the United States was long overdue, the timing of the ruling is suspicious.

"Malacañang wants to take Erap out of the picture in the May 2004 elections so he cannot rally his supporters for FPJ," Dilangalen said in a phone interview.

Malacañang is hoping that the ruling will heal not only Estrada's knee ailment but also .the political divisions in the country. Ms Macapagal's camp expects the Sandiganbayan's grant of a three-month leave for Estrada to seek medical treatment abroad to "pacify" his supporters particularly during the national elections in May.

Housing Secretary Michael Defensor said Estrada's supporters, who mounted Edsa III against Ms Macapagal, would see that "the President has only compassion and humanitarian consideration in deference to the former head of state."

Defensor, campaign spokesperson for Ms Macapagal and her emissary to Estrada, also said that the ousted leader's travel abroad for medical reasons could boost the Ms Macapagal's campaign for reconciliation.

Double standard

Presidential aspirant Raul Roco slammed the Sandiganbayan for creating "a new legal standard for clemency that favors the illegally rich" by allowing detained Estrada to leave for the United States.

Roco said the ruling set a precedent for other detainees who would ask to be allowed to get medical treatment abroad. Only those who can afford to spend millions for such trip can enjoy such clemency, he said.

"It's a ruling for the rich—for the plunderer, the smuggler, the drug lord, the smuggler, the gambler. They're the only ones who can afford [the trip] since they have easy money. But not if you're poor," Roco said.

"The Sandiganbayan is institutionalizing a double standard for clemency that favors the rich," he continued.

A group monitoring the conduct of the plunder case against Estrada said the Sandiganbayan decision reeked of "extrajudicial and political considerations."

PlunderWatch, one of the first groups to call for the impeachment of Estrada on his alleged involvement in illegal gambling, said the Sandiganbayan decision had given a special "and unnecessary" privilege to someone accused of a non-bailable and heinous crime.

In a statement, PlunderWatch convenor Carol Araullo said the Sandiganbayan decision was a classic case of unequal justice long decried by poor and powerless litigants with the misfortune of having to seek justice in Philippine courts.

No influence

But Defensor denied that the anti-graft court was influenced by the President's repeated pronouncements for reconciliation and humane treatment for Estrada.

"The Sandiganbayan decided independently. As we have always stated, we respect the independence of the courts and would abide by their decisions," he said.

The CBCP president, Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla, hailed the court's decision.

"As a Christian and Catholic, I join many of our fellow believers in happily thanking the court for its humane and compassionate gesture which is in tune with the spirit of Christmas," Capalla said in a statement.

"We will always uphold and respect the rule of law and acknowledge that the Sandiganbayan has ruled with compassion and understanding within the bounds of its mandate," El Shaddai head Mike Velarde said in a statement.

Chief Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said his group would ask the Supreme Court to stop the implementation of a controversial ruling.

"[Estrada] never asked for temporary liberty. He didn't ask for bail. So why would the court grant him that privilege by way of a travel bond? If he leaves the country, the court can do nothing if he goes anywhere," he said.

Private prosecutor Marichu Lambino said: "The court has allowed a person charged with a capital offense to escape."

Dilangalen said that while the Sandiganbayan ruling granted Estrada until March 31, 2004 to have his surgery, the entire process "may take longer than that."

"Surgery, therapy and complete rehabilitation would take up at least six months and that would mean that Erap could be back after the May 2004 elections," he said. *With reports from Blanche S. Rivera, Dona Pazzibugan, Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Norman Bordadora*

PR people . . .

From page A1

putation of her right leg. She has been confined to the POC since September, missing her high school classes in her native Quezon province.

"I really feel loved, even by people who are not even my relatives," Latag said in Filipino, when told that the PRSP people had forgone their own party to bring Yuletide cheer to her and her fellow patients.

A hospital aide then moved the wheelchair-bound Latag from the isolation room to the program at the ward's center aisle, where about a dozen PRSP officials and members distributed party food and gifts.

Courtesy of a fast-food chain tapped by the PRSP for the catering, a big yellow "chicken" mascot waved and pranced about in between the hospital beds, drawing shouts of joy from the fragile occupants even while their broken limbs lie in hard plaster casts or dangle from overhead metal props.

Though she could not see the mascot from the bed where she lay, 4-year-old Daniella Magtalas knew at once that a party was going on. In *sando* and diapers, the chubby girl was all smiles as she held her hands up high, moving them in rhythmic circles upon hearing the popular Sex Bomb dance song "Spageti."

Delighted

The delighted mother, Nerissa, hovered over her bubbly daughter. Those brief moments seemed to have banished her worries over the fact that Daniella was being treated for Potts disease. The affliction affects the spinal column, hence Daniella can only "dance" while lying flat on her back.

At the time of the party, there were a total of 59 patients, including 18 Potts disease and five cancer sufferers at the cramped children's ward of POC, a government-run hospital in Quezon City.

Marbella said the PRSP, which has about 120 members nationwide, could have easily spent between P20,000 and P30,000 for its annual Christmas party which is usually held at a 5-star hotel.

"But who among us needs another party?" said PRSP member Vic del Fierro following a candid exchange about PR people's work.

"This is the 'good side' of PR," Del Fierro said after acknowledging that the PR profession in the country tends to be associated more with "wining and dining, crisis management, and even black propaganda" than with the promotion of "corporate citizenship."

Inspired

"But as one of my college teachers told us of what good PR is, it is doing something good and telling people about it—not to boast but so that others might be inspired to follow," he said.

One of the senior members of the group, Del Fierro proudly recalled that in the late '60s, his PR company came up with "creative ways" of making a commercial pitch for clients through projects that benefited underprivileged children.

He once had a "Flying Santa Claus" arrive in a chopper to hand out gifts, donate a baby elephant to the Manila Zoo, and had orphans board a commercial aircraft for a 20-minute flight over Metro Manila.

The project involving the orphans tugged most at his heart, he said, for he lost both his parents also at a young age of 13.

"I had also been confined in a hospital before for 30 days when I had a stroke in 1998. So I know how it feels to be a patient with Christmas fast approaching and that's why what we were doing here is, to me, very touching," Del Fierro said.

The PRSP's Christmas treat at the POC was in partnership with Kythe Foundation, which runs charity programs for child patients in eight other hospitals around the country.

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'Tis the season to eat, but don't overdo it–DOH

By Blanche S. Rivera

WATCH IT.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit yesterday sounded the alarm on the safety of food preparations this Christmas even as weight management experts reminded overeating Filipinos to watch their diet as weight-related problems increase after the holidays.

Helen Ong, cardiologist of the St. Luke's weight management center, said that ailments such as hypertension and diabetes increase in the first month of the year as people tend to overeat and forget their dietary requirements.

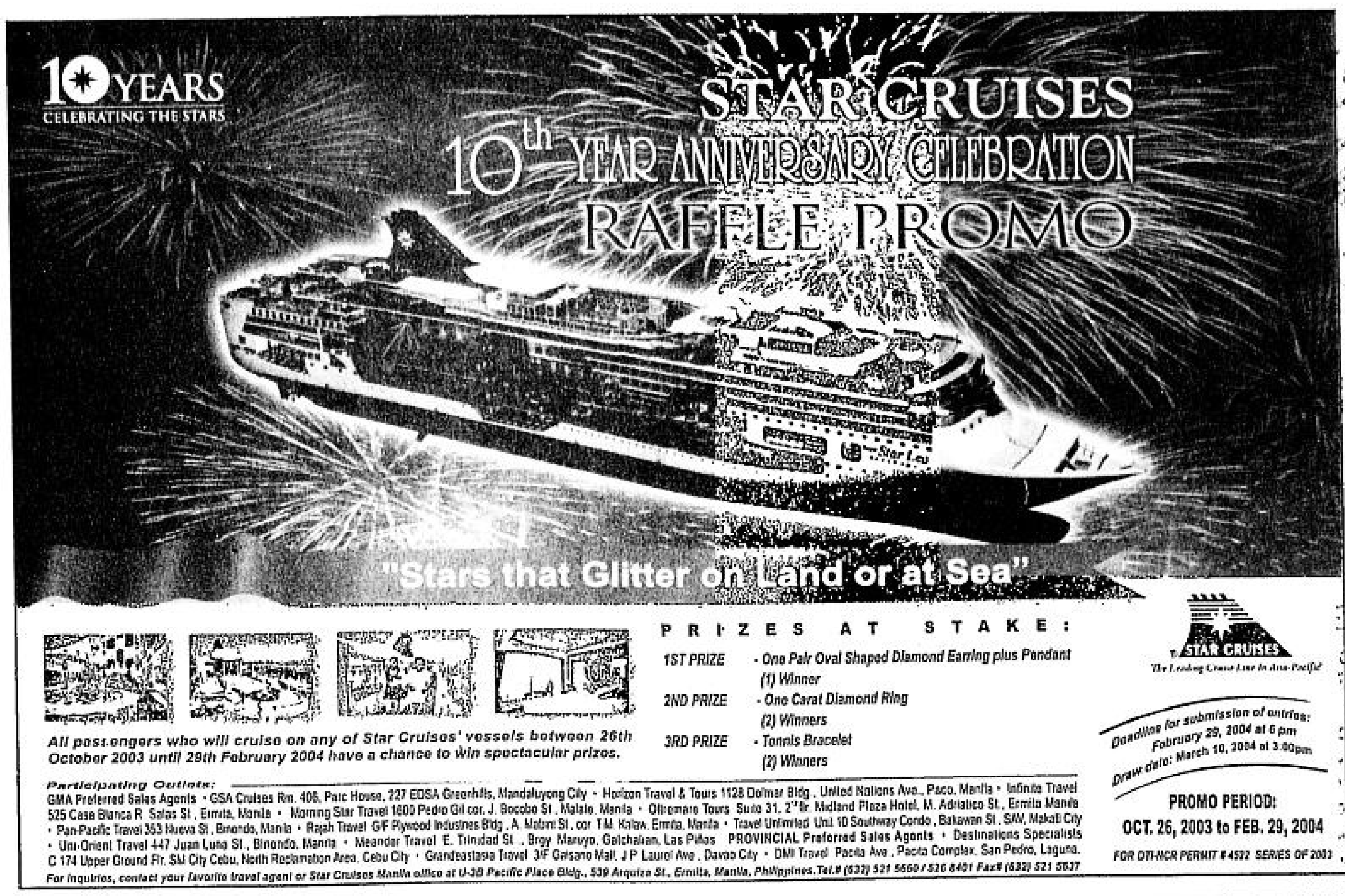
Ong said in an earlier press forum that Filipinos tend to gain from five to 10 pounds during the holidays. Cases of weight-related problems also rise by about five percent during barrio fiestas and Christmas and New Year's celebrations.

"We're not saying don't eat because this is a time to celebrate... but eat only what you can burn f you do not want to gain too much weight and have problems," Ong said.

The Department of Health meanwhile asked homemakers to be extra careful in handling food during the holidays to avoid food-borne and water-borne diseases.

Dayrit said that mothers and even caterers should pay special attention to hygiene in the preparation of their noche buena on Christmas and media noche on New Year's eve.

He cited the recent clustering of cholera cases in Tondo, Manila due to contaminated water and food-borne bacteria, which were later transmitted through person to person contact.



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Polls to create more jobs, says labor chief

By Martin P. Marfil

THE COUNTRY'S employment figures will be boosted by the 2004 elections as candidates are expected to hire armies of youths to help in their campaigns.

At the same time, acting Labor Secretary Manuel Imson said that government will stick to its original target of an additional 3 million jobs for next year, saying it is determined to open several new markets overseas, maintain the lead in some and implement new local programs next year.

"During elections, our employment figures go up. Youths get temporary jobs as researchers, pasting posters and other temporary jobs,' 'Imson said the other night.

Based on his analysis, local employment is heavily dependent on foreign investments and with the coming elections, foreign investments would adopt a "wait and see" attitude during the elections.

"It is a political year. In the first half, investors will wait and see but after the elections, they'll be coming in," he said.

But the slack would be covered by the elections where candidates, which the Commission on Elections would involve more than 400,000 aspirants for the various posts, would hire people for their campaigns.

"Our (employment) target is still 3 million jobs, a million each from the private and government sectors and we want to deploy another million for the overseas market," the official said.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, December 25, 2003
Christmas

1st Reading: Is 52:7-10
2nd Reading: Heb 1:1-6
Gospel: Jn 1:1-5, 9-14

In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God; he was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without him nothing came to be. Whatever has come to be, found life in him, life which for humans was also light.

Light that shines in the dark: light that darkness could not overcome. For the Light was coming into the world, the true Light that enlightens everyone.

He was already in the world and through him the world was made, the very world that did not know him. He came to his own, yet his own people did not receive him; but all who have received him he empowers to become children of God for they believe in his Name. These are born, but without seed or carnal desire or will of man: they are born of God.

And the Word was made flesh; he had his tent pitched among us, and we have seen his Glory, the Glory of the only Son coming from the Father: fullness of truth and loving-kindness.

Commentary

The promised Child is not born in an inn, not only because there is no room at the inn, but because the inn, the place of travelers and transients, is no place for him, who is not here for a visit, but to stay. "The Word was made flesh and pitched his tent among us," St. John proclaims. There is no longer any uncompanioned human sorrow or joy, because God in Jesus shares all with us. And he comes not only to be with us, but also to flood our human existence with the unimaginable goodness of his divinity. "And we have seen his glory," St. John continues, "the glory of an only Son, filled with grace and truth." Grace and truth, Karis and aletheia in Greek, translations of the Hebrew words used by Israel to describe Yahweh's incomparability: hesed and emeth, loving kindness and fidelity. On this day, then, in the midst of the darkness of our times, we might confidently borrow and paraphrase the victorious words of St. Paul: "If God is with us, who can be against us?"

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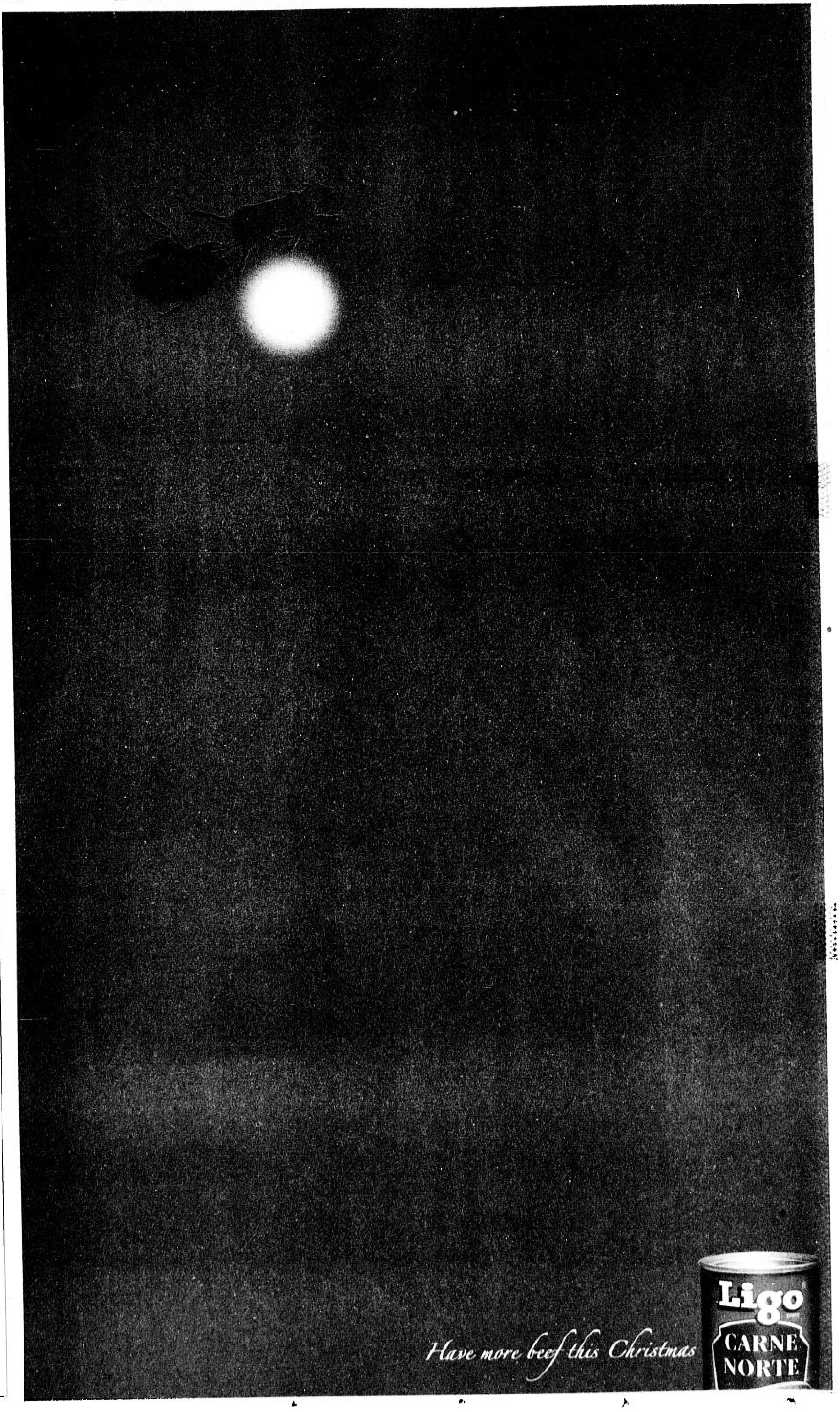

More int'l aid for victims

By Jerome Aning

MORE international aid for the victims of the Leyte and Surigao andslides poured in yesterday, with the governments of China and Germany donating about P9 million.

Foreign Secretary Delia Domingo-Albert said she had expressed the Philippines' "deep appreciation" for the P5.5-million check presented by Chinese Ambassador Wang Chungui.

"I told him that we are deeply moved by their generous gesture and that the Filipino people find great comfort in the kind thoughts and kindness of close friends like China during this time of great challenge and extreme sorrow," Albert told reporters after her meeting with Wang.

Albert said the ambassador also conveyed his government's sympathies for the victims. "China shares our deep sense of loss and hopes that [its] donation will help alleviate the suffering of hose left behind and contribute o rescue, recovery and rehabiliation efforts in Leyte and Surigao," she said.

German Ambassador Herbert Hess said he had contacted Southern Leyte officials to arrange the listribution of relief goods worth 50,000 euros (about P3.4 million).

Hess said the initial batch was lown yesterday to Cebu and shipped to Maasin, Southern Leyte. From there, it will be transported to the stricken areas on Friday or Saturday.

In New York, Lauro Baja, the Philippines' permanent representaive to the United Nations, reported he release of a $50,000 emergency grant from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (Ocha) in Geneva.

The grant is intended for the ocal purchase and transport of relief items to the stricken areas, Baja said.

He said the Ocha was prepared o serve as a channel for cash contributions in coordination with UN organizations.

Celebrate despite grief, Leyte victims urged

From page A1

Gloom pervaded the church's multipurpose building where many of the survivors, most of them still in shock, are staying.

Elvesa Minadajao, 43, who lost a cousin, a niece and a number of distant relatives, said she did not even want to hear Christmas carols because these only made her cry.

"I am not blaming God for what happened ... but there is no reason for me to celebrate Christmas," she said.

The Barangay Council of Punta was scheduled to hold a Christmas party today. But Kagawad Rico Maitim said he could not even feel the holiday spirit.

Maitim, who took part in the recovery operations, said about half of the 92 bodies he had helped retrieve were those of his kin.

He said his tears fell each time a body was recovered.

Maitim said he was in favor of the plan to convert Punta, 1.5 km from the town proper, into a municipal cemetery. He said he did not want to remember his horrible experience and could not bear to rebuild his home where many village folk were buried alive.

He also said he wanted to be relocated to Barangay Dakit in the town proper.

As many as 71 bodies have been recovered. About 30 others remained buried in the mud and debris.

GMA's 'example'

In Manila, Malacañang announced that President Macapagal-Arroyo would cancel her traditional Christmas vacation in Baguio.

According to her spokesperson Ignacio Bunye, the President decided to forego her annual break in the mountain city because she wanted to re-channel the funds that would be used for her and her entourage.

Bunye told reporters that the funds would be used to boost contributions for the relief of survivors of the landslides and flash floods in Southern Leyte and other areas in the Visayas and Mindanao.

He did not provide an estimate of the cost of the President's transportation and lodging in Baguio.

Bunye said Ms Macapagal decided to cancel her Baguio sojourn to "set an example to other members of society to give whatever they can share."

When asked whether the President was also willing to donate the equivalent of her monthly salary or bonus, Bunye did not answer and changed the topic.

Ms Macapagal was to have stayed in Baguio starting tomorrow until Jan. 4. She has spent the past two Christmas breaks in that city since she became President in 2001.

It was in Baguio last Dec. 30 that she made her now famous declaration that she would not seek election in 2004. She announced her change her heart last October.

Bunye said the President had decided on a simple observance of Christmas by attending the Midnight Mass in a church in Metro Manila and sharing a *noche buena* lunch with her family today.

"She wants a very simple celebration, and she wants to make it a family activity," Bunye said.

SURVIVOR Lucresio Labandia Sr. finds comfort in his relatives, while his wife and four of his children and neighbors who sought refuge in his house in Barangay Punta, San Francisco, Southern Leyte, died. VAL HANDUMON

Airlift

Help finally arrived in Barangay Pinut-an in the town of San Ricardo, which was isolated for three days because of the massive landslides.

Four of the injured were airlifted to the Southern Leyte Provincial Hospital in the capital city of Maasin on Tuesday and yesterday. They were identified as Juliet Pasasadaba, 47; Mary Anne Bernal, 14; Francisco Sevenorio, 69; and Felisa Mejia, 65.

Businessman Edwin Pasasadaba, husband of Juliet, said most of the injured were rescued on Dec. 21.

He said there was no other way to transport them to the hospital except by air because the roads had become impassable.

Also, he said, rescue teams on board Navy vessels could not dock because of strong winds and big waves.

While waiting for help to arrive, the injured were sheltered in the school serving as evacuation center, Pasasadaba said.

He said it was good that he had a supply of medicines in his store, which was damaged by the flash flood. He said he gave the antibiotics to his wife, and the rest of the medicines to the others injured.

Juliet Pasasadaba suffered a fracture in the left leg, which needed surgery. Bernal had injuries in the left shoulder and chest, while Sevenorio complained of difficulty in breathing.

Mejia, who was found half buried in the mud, could barely walk. She is the sister-in-law of former Mayor Vicente Mejia, who had tried to save children from the flash flood and was later reported missing.

On foot

The province of Southern Leyte was the worst-hit by landslides.

Officials told Reuters that supply routes to some towns had been cleared but that more remote areas remained inaccessible by road.

Andy Fuego, an official with the Regional Disaster Coordinating Council, said soldiers were trying to deliver supplies on foot to San Ricardo, which was virtually wiped out by a river of mud.

"Water is a problem there and because of the distance, help could not be extended to them," Fuego said. "I was not able to go there yesterday because the roads are impassable." *With reports from Gil Cabacungan Jr. in Manila; Reuters*

Search continues for missing boat passengers

From page A1

the treacherous reefs.

Former Balabac Vice Mayor Haj Ismail Hussein had reported to authorities through satellite phone that five people had been rescued on Mangee Island.

Jardiniano said local officials were checking the report even as he speculated that the five may have been rescued by Malaysian fishing boats which have joined the search and rescue operations.

He said a Navy ship recovered a still unidentified body near the country's maritime border with Malaysia at 4 p.m. yesterday.

The Malaysian government had given Philippine planes and boats permission to enter its territory as part of search and rescue operations.

Jardiniano said the Malaysian Navy had informed him that four of its ships had changed course to scour areas where Pia-ry's passengers and crew members may have drifted.

Fourteen of the 20 passengers, who were rescued by a Panamanian-registered tanker MV Pacific Valor on Monday near the Fearless Shoal, have been discharged.

Six of them, however, were still confined at the Brooke's Point District Hospital in Palawan.

Lt. Armand Balilo, a spokesperson for the Coast Guard, identified the six as Arik Mohamad Sam, 9, Joey Mohamad Sam, 6, Jeffrey Hirod, 17, and Josam Hassam, 30, Sahara Sarail, 43, and Nahura Sali Abdul Rahim, 45.

The 69-ton Pia-ry sank at 1 p.m. Sunday while on its way to Brooke's Point. The vessel left Mapun in Cagayan de Tawi-Tawi, a cluster of islets in the Sulu Sea, at 5:30 p.m. Saturday despite stormy weather.

The ferry sank amid heavy rains that also caused deadly landslides in Eastern Visayas and Northern Mindanao.

While the search for survivors at the Philippine-Malaysian border continued, the Japanese Coast Guard reported that an explosion on a chemical tanker off southwestern Japan on Wednesday left two Filipino crew members missing.

The official said the explosion occurred in waters off Yamaguchi prefecture, causing a fire to break out.

Coast Guard helicopters and patrol boats had been sent to the scene.

The 4,356-ton Panamanian-registered tanker, the Sun Venus, was carrying 4,000 tons of ethanol. The vessel was headed to Kobe in western Japan from South Korea, the Coast Guard said.

All of the tanker's 19 crew members were from the Philippines, it said. *Reports from Jofelle P. Tesorio, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Leila B. Salaverria in Manila; AFP and Reuters*

From street kid to top policeman

rom page A1

Then 13, Bill had thought they would be killed because the reclamation area was known at that ime as dumping ground of "salvaged" victims. Little did he know hat it was what would save his ife.

Pier

Bill and his two younger brothers lived in a shanty at the pier area.

His father and namesake was a *cargador* (stevedore) who drank oo much. His mother Bonifacia peddled cigarettes but was fond of playing cards and mahjong.

It was not surprising that little money was left for food and nothing for education.

Although his parents were not exactly role models, Bill was ambitious. His torn shorts did not top him from going to the Tejero Elementary School where he was enrolled.

"*Usahay manimaho ko ug baura* (Sometimes, I smelled like garbage)," he said smiling. "I really wanted to go to school because I don't want to end up like my parents."

His desire to learn was most of he times overtaken by the need o survive.

"I go to the pier to sell ice candy in order to have some money. Sometimes, I swam near the vessels and dived for coins tossed by he passengers," Bill recalled.

When business was not brisk, especially on weekends, he combed the piles of garbage for anything edible or saleable. Sometimes, he stole corn kernels rom sacks piled at the pier.

He remembered how he hated he authorities then—policemen, Coast Guard and Philippines Ports Authorities personnel. They picked him up only to order him o clean their offices. By the time he was finished, his ice candies had melted.

Diversion project

In 1981, the city government passed Ordinance No. 1087, creating the CSYGC as a diversionary project for children in conflict with law that would be manned by the Cebu City Police Office.

EGMEDIO Felisan Jr.: (From left) As a street kid, college graduate and police officer.

Street urchins from the pier and Colon Street were picked up and brought to the center. At first, the facility was filled with tension because the *batang pier* and the *batang Colon* had always been at odds.

Occasional brawls broke out between the warring members who were not used to following rules. Others tried to escape. But for Bill, his stay at the center was a prayer answered.

The boys were fed, sheltered and made to go to school. To earn money for school allowance, they cleaned soft drink bottles for 10 centavos per case. They were introduced to the discipline and regimen of the Boy Scouts.

His parents did not know where he was nor did they make an effort to look for him. "My mother was always at the gambling joint where she stayed until morning. My parents hardly noticed us."

His parents learned about what happened when he was allowed to go home a week after he was picked up. He asked for permission to live in the shelter and bring with him his brothers—Romeo, 12 and Ernest, 6.

Surrogate parents

Bill started to be affectionate to then Sgt. Teresita Ayag, the center administrator, and her husband, Sgt. Teodoro Ayag, the center's scoutmaster. Both of them retired as police chief inspectors although they still work at the center.

"It was at the center where I experienced parental love," he explained. "They [Ayag couple] fed us. They treated us like their own children."

Bill said his image of the police changed. "I realized there were also good policemen."

The brothers stayed at the center while their parents remained at the pier, living the life the way they knew. Sometimes, they visited them but this was not quite often.

After he finished his elementary education, the center sent Bill to the University of the Visayas for high school.

During his second year, he took the placement test and was accelerated to college. While waiting for the National College Entrance Examination, he took up vocational courses on electronics at the Manpower National Youth Council.

After he passed the NCEE, he received a scholarship grant from the Sal Foundation and enrolled for a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Technology course at the now-defunct Cebu State College in Science and Technology-Abellana College of Arts and Trade.

'Dugot' kid

He continued to stay at the center. His allowance still depended on the number of bottles he cleaned. He was given P2 for jeepney fare.

To survive, he asked the school canteen to give him the *dugot* (cooked rice that stick at the bottom of the pot) for his meals.

Sometimes, he ran errands for teachers in exchange for a few pesos.

Bill admitted that there were moments when he wanted to give up, especially when he did not have the money to pay for school projects. But the CSYGC staff continued to encourage him.

So, he asked his teachers to exempt him from the projects. Instead, he was made an assistant to the shop and his grades would depend on his performance. The teachers agreed.

Awards

His hard work started to pay off. In 1987, Felisan received a pleasant surprise.

Two hours before graduation from the Reserved Officers Training Course, he was told that he was to be awarded the Honor Star medal for getting a grade of 87.5 percent. He was a cadet.

He immediately informed Ms Ayag about it. When his name was called, his mother went up on stage and pinned the medal on him. He did not know that Mrs. Ayag had fetched his mother to surprise him.

"When I saw my mother, I was touched. I saw my mother was happy," he recalled.

His mother beamed with pride during his graduation in 1989 where he also received awards for leadership and service.

"My mother was so happy because she could not believe that she had a son who was a professional," Bill said.

When asked where his father was, he replied smiling: "He could not make it. He was drunk."

After graduation, Bill thought it was time to pay it forward. He rejected an offer from an appliance firm where he had his on-the-job training (OJT) to undergo six-month training in Japan because he wanted to be a policeman.

"I would be able to help the street children like me, if I became a policeman. Even if the job is not financially rewarding, I will be able to help change the lives of street children. I can be an example, a model for them," he explained.

At that time, Felisan was already appointed assistant scoutmaster at the center. He also found it difficult to leave the CSYGC, his home for 10 years.

Since he already passed a police examination in 1988, Felisan underwent a six-month training at the Police Training Center after graduation.

His first assignment was at the Mabolo police station although his home remained in the scouts community.

Despite his meager salary, Felisan bought educational plans despite the fact that he was not sure if he would get married and have children.

"When I was growing up, other people took care of me. I just do not want my children to experience what I went through," he explained.

First meeting

He met his future wife in 1991 when he was a beat patrolman assigned to Colon Street. He spotted Myrna Mahusay, a sales representative of a garment company, eating in a *carinderia*.

They started out as friends until the relationship blossomed into something deep and meaningful. They got married in June 1993.

But the wedding was bittersweet for Bill. His mother died of tuberculosis two months before he was to take his marriage vows. Although grieving for his mother's death, he went ahead with the ceremony because everything was already set.

The newlyweds were given their own place at the center. They were later blessed with two children—Christian Bill, now 10 and Christine, 6.

By 2000, Bill started to be restless. Although his children were happy playing with his wards at the center, he was obsessed with realizing his other dream—to have a house of his own.

"There are only two things that I can give to my children—a house and a good education, which my parents failed to give me. At least, when it is the time for the children to graduate, they could not say I neglected them," he said.

His prayer was answered when a village official in Consolacion town in Cebu offered him his 100-square-meter lot for P700 per square meter.

Bill immediately applied for a loan of P115,000 with the Armed Forces of the Philippines Savings and Loan Association Inc. The rest of the money was used to buy construction materials. He asked his wards at the center to help him build his home.

The family transferred in 2001 although the house had yet to be completed. Bill did not mind. For him, this is his home.

Now, Bill is happy with his blessings. His son is a consistent honor student at the Danlag Elementary School. His daughter, now in kindergarten, simply adored him.

He also makes sure he attends to the children's needs. He sends them to school and prepares their meals, including lunch, so his wife does not have to cook.

At night when everything is quiet, he remembers what he went through and wished that his parents were able to enjoy the fruits of his success. His father had died in 1999.

"I wanted them to enjoy what I have. I wanted them to realize that they should not have lost hope. There are parents who have little education yet they are able to keep their children with them. My parents had lost hope," Bill said.

But Bill never stopped hoping and was determined to achieve his dreams. And this made him different from the other street children.

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

US consumers worry over mad cow disease

WASHINGTON—From consumers to beef producers, Americans braced for the fallout from the apparent discovery of mad cow disease in the United States even as federal officials insisted the food supply was safe.

The impact was evident almost immediately: Several nations, including Japan, South Korea, Australia and Taiwan, halted US beef imports just hours after the agriculture department announced Tuesday that a cow at a farm near Yakima, Washington, had tested positive for the brain-wasting disease. Japan is the largest overseas market for US beef.

Agriculture department officials and cattle industry executives tried to allay fears that American beef supplies had become infected, saying the US inspection system was working effectively: The farm where the cow originated has been quarantined and officials were tracing the movement of the cow from the farm to the slaughterhouse, and the flow of the meat to three processing plants in Washington state.

"We remain confident in the safety of our food supply," Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman said in announcing the first suspected US case of mad cow disease.

Veneman also assured Americans that no foul play was suspected.

"This incident is not terrorist-related," she said.

Mad cow disease eats holes in the brains of cattle. It sprang up in Britain in 1986 and spread through countries in Europe and Asia, prompting massive destruction of herds and decimating the European beef industry.

People can contract a form of mad cow disease if they eat infected beef or nerve tissue, and possibly through blood transfusions. The human form of mad cow disease so far has killed 143 people in Britain and 10 elsewhere, none in the United States.

Veneman said the risk to human health in this US case was "extremely low."

Nonetheless, US beef producers worried that they could suffer heavily from a mad cow scare. Restaurants that serve beef also could be affected.

"I think it has the potential to hurt our industry," said Jim Olson, a rancher in Stanfield, Arizona, who owns about 150 cattle.

Consumers Union, the publisher of Consumer Reports magazine, called on the government to test more cows for the disease, formally known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

"The US needs to be far more proactive in protecting the American food supply," said Michael Hansen, a senior research associate. "We are very concerned that the diseased animal made it into the food supply and that the processing plants could be contaminated."

The disease was found in a Holstein cow, which could not move on its own, from a farm in Mabton, Washington, about 65 km southeast of Yakima. It tested preliminarily positive on Dec. 9. Parts of the cow that would be infected—the brain, the spinal cord and the lower part of the small intestine—were removed before the animal went to a meat processing plant.

Samples from the cow were sent to Britain for confirmation of the preliminary mad cow finding, Veneman said. The results will be known in three to five days, she added. *AP*

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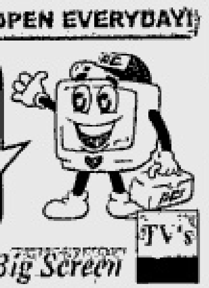

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Mao is management guru

SHANGHAI, China—He dismissed capitalists as "running dogs," banned private property and sent millions to prison for showing an interest in making money.

But now an incongruous new identity beckons for Mao Zedong: management guru.

As the 110th anniversary of his birth on Dec. 26 approaches, books, articles and seminars are mining Mao's struggles and writings for tips on how to get ahead in business, melding a national interest in his life with China's modern craze for making money.

The Communist Party is pitching in, publishing four volumes on Mao as a guerrilla problem-solver.

"Mao offers you enterprise management tips you can't get from other business studies, especially Western ones," media consultant Zhang Changlei wrote in the weekly magazine China Business. "It's something drawn from politics, philosophy and military strategy."

It's the latest proof of the durability of Mao's status as the commanding figure of modern China—an identity that not only survived its embrace of the market, but is helping others to profit from it.

The management guides are part of an avalanche of books marking this year's anniversary.

They range from tomes on Mao's military strategy to a photo-filled book by his 67-year-old daughter, Li Min, titled "My Childhood and My Father the Leader."

Concerts, postage stamps and the publication of gilt-edged collections of Mao's poetry will also commemorate the event.

Mao died in 1976 at age 82, having led China through war, man-made famines that killed tens of millions and the political violence of the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution, which scarred a generation.

But time has mellowed Mao's image, and today he is an object of widespread nationalistic admiration as a wily guerrilla commander and the creator of modern China.

His philosophy, a hodgepodge of cryptic aphorisms and can-do exhortations known simply as "Mao Zedong Thought," is inscribed in the constitution and a required course for college students.

The management books and articles, however, are a variation on the usual fulsome official praise for Mao.

They attempt to square his iconoclastic communism with the hardheaded pragmatism of a China that began turning away from his radical communist vision a quarter century ago.

The books issued by the party's Central History Publishing Office focus on managing projects, picking and motivating subordinates, dealing with crises and winning deals.

"Mao Zedong's unique approach to people helps us rethink how we deploy and nurture manpower and helps us perfect our personnel mechanisms," says the introduction to "Mao Zedong Teaches us About Personnel Matters."

Much of the book stresses morality and trust in dealings with others, qualities often cited as sorely lacking in the modern Chinese business world. *AP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Engineers released

KABUL—Two Indian engineers released nearly three weeks after they were abducted in central Afghanistan while working on a key road project said Wednesday that they were not mistreated and appeared in good health. Interior Minister Ali Ahmad Jalali said the men were released Tuesday night and that no ransom payment was made. "Finally, the people who abducted them agreed to free them without conditions," said Jalali. "I think these people made a good decision to free our friends." *AP*

Terror alert up

ANKARA, Turkey—The US Embassy in Bahrain urged Americans to avoid crowded areas, while in Turkey a police document obtained by The Associated Press warned that militants were preparing attacks against Israeli, US and other Western interests over the holidays. The moves abroad came after the US government warned that Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terror group could stage a major attack soon at home or abroad and raised the national security level on Sunday up to orange, which is "high" alert. AP

Malvo gets life

CHESAPEAKE, Virginia—Teenage sniper Lee Boyd Malvo was spared from joining his mentor John Allen Muhammad on death row when a jury sentenced him to life in prison, agreeing with the defense that Malvo was an impressionable boy who fell under Muhammad's murderous spell. Malvo, 18, wearing a blue sweater on Tuesday that made him look like a schoolboy, sat expressionless, his elbows on the defense table. The judge must impose life without parole when Malvo is formally sentenced March 10 for his part in the three-week reign of terror that left 10 people dead in and around the nation's capital in October 2002. The jury of eight women and four men took 8 1/2 hours over two days to decide his fate. *AP*

Comedian pardoned

NEW YORK—Thirty-seven years after he died of a drug overdose, pioneering comedian Lenny Bruce was pardoned on Tuesday for a 1964 obscenity conviction over a raunchy, irreverent monologue at a New York nightclub. New York Gov. George Pataki, issuing what his office said was the first posthumous pardon in the state's history, said his action symbolized New York's commitment to Americans' constitutionally guaranteed right to free speech. "Freedom of speech is one of the greatest American liberties and I hope this pardon serves as a reminder of the precious freedoms we are fighting to preserve," Pataki said in a statement. *Reuters*

Syphilis outbreak

VANCOUVER, Canada—Vancouver is facing the worst outbreak of syphilis per capita in the developed world, with city health officials fearful of a looming epidemic of the sexually transmitted disease once thought almost wiped out in North America. A total of 254 new cases have been diagnosed locally this year authorities said early this week—more than the total for North America in two decades, with more expected, said Dr. Michael Rekart of the British Columbia Center for Disease Control. "There's a lot of unsafe sex going on in Vancouver and the disease has simply taken hold," Rekart said. *AFP*

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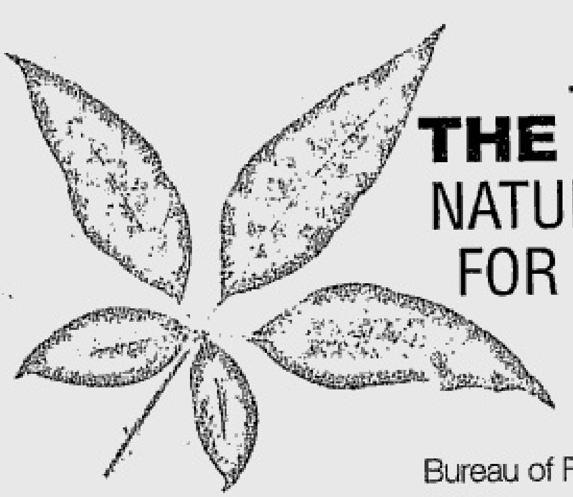

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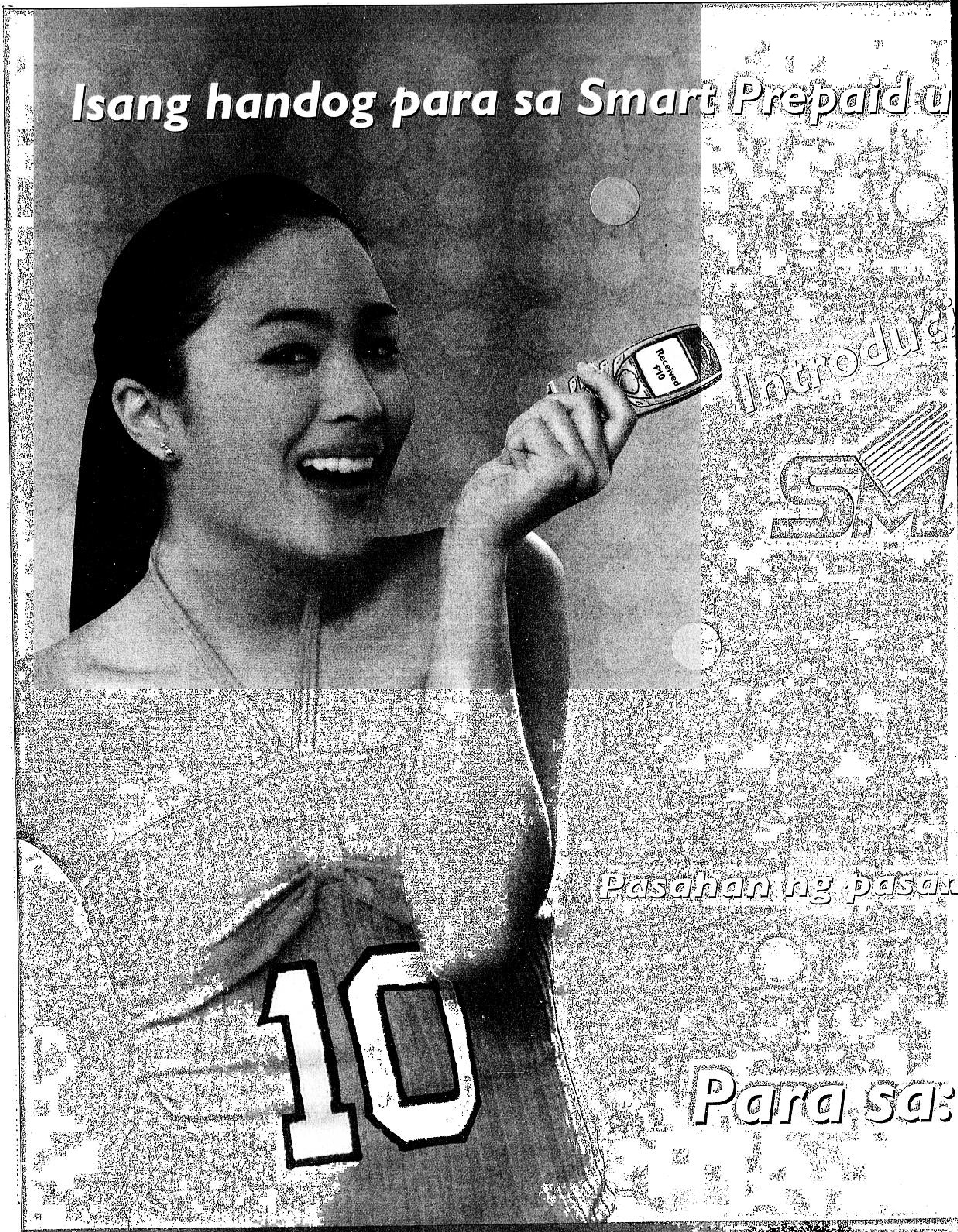
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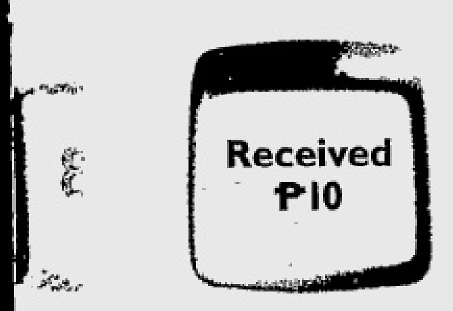
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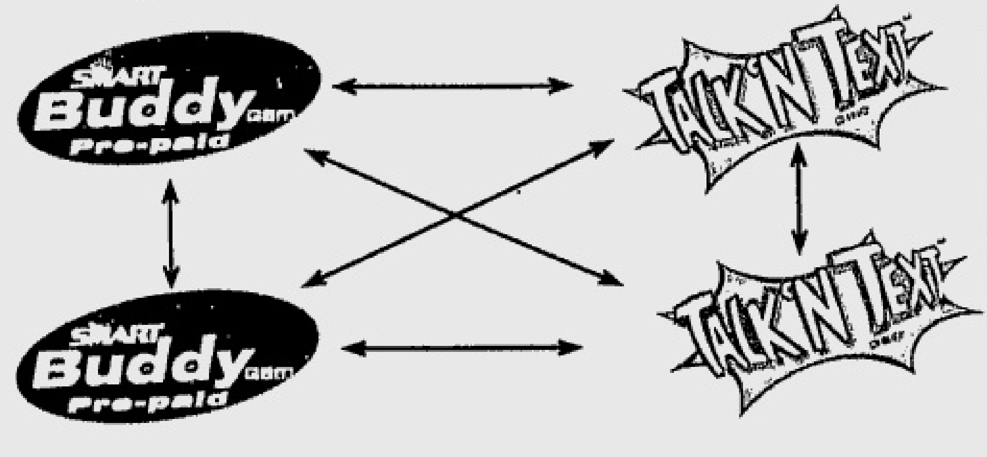
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EDITORIALS

Earth and water

ALL at once a hush descends as though a switch has been flipped, and the bedlam of the past days dissolves into the chill. Time now to linger in this silence, to grasp the moment in the knowledge that something so rare cannot possibly endure. Time also to remember, with a mighty effort, that what has become a yearly madness was actually intended to honor The One.

There is, or should be, room for contemplation on this day that soothes all children (and lovers, who live on stolen time). There is, or should be, reason for working stiffs all but rendered oblivious to the signs of the season to be stirred by this day, and everything that memory (although perfidious) proclaims it to be. And not only reason but also rhyme—else what's imagination for?

In the infinity between your waking and the moment before the children gleefully leap out of bed, in the somewhat eerie blue air when the sky recovers from the surprise of sunrise and the birds celebrate the new day, you are moved to sing praise. You are suddenly keenly aware of creation's amazing grace, and you think that it is as close as you can come to happiness (granting that it exists).

But the silence cracks with distant weeping. Elsewhere on this broken land, across swollen rivers, desolate mountains and felled trees, sorrow moves in big strides, hacking a swath of suffering among those mourning their dead and even now grieving that, by a miracle, they live. Their grief acquires a sharper edge by virtue of the season—a cruel blow that envelops holiday joy in misery to produce a particularly profound despair.

Picture it. Whole families mired in the mud, children and parents, wives and husbands, rendered extinct by a terrible force, their bodies entwined in the shambles of their homes. These are images otherwise inconceivable in this season when children sing in exquisite voices of peace and goodwill, but literally fleshed out by the power of photographs beamed across space and time...

To inexorably hit home. The heart breaks for the living and the dead, for the truncated dreams and snuffed-out hope, for the love too puny, in the cosmic scheme of things, to stem earth and water.

Wind and fire

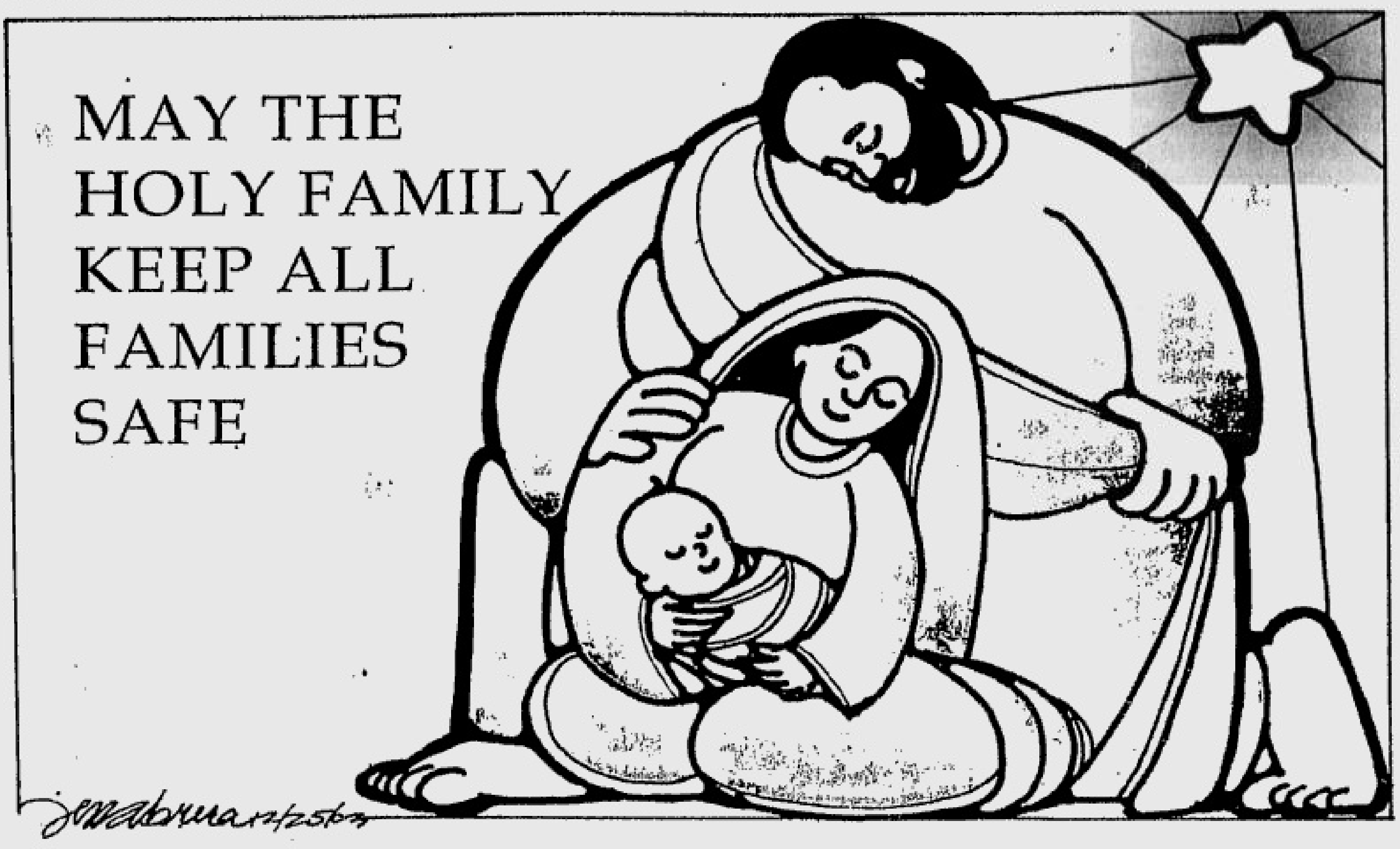
THE WIND of grief shakes this day that culminates the season's expectations. And also a simmering fire of anger that is, or should be, out of place in the annual script of our lives, which dictates that the year's end spell joy.

Not that this twist, as it were, is so wrenching because it is so new. We are hardly amateurs in holiday mourning, having been devastated by deaths by the thousands, whether at sea and on land, in perverse seasonal timing. Perhaps it is the recurrence, the seeming pattern, that galvanizes the wind and stokes the fire?

The pietistic—the sort who would show up at the house of God after days and nights of official thievery, wearing a face deemed appropriate to meet the Holy Face—may take offense at a display of anger on this day for which reverent hymns are sung. But it is crucial to rage against the recurring occasion for grief, to refuse to accept what is gradually becoming a theme, an exotic motif perfect for CNN footage and sound bites, an always available window to Third World underdevelopment. It is crucial to apprehend this anger, to, as a wise man once said, recognize the feel of it, the "texture" and "moisture," the "shiver down the back," the "quick flash of heat" arching through the brain, to allow us to eventually step away from it.

And, from there, proceed to pinpoint responsibility for this tragedy, actually one among many and now hewing to a pattern, yet singular for the aching void left by the dead—the mothers and fathers, the aunts and grandmothers, the principal of Panaon Institute, the would-be class valedictorian, the children who just a day earlier were playing in the unrelenting rain...

In the urban centers, the hubs of commerce have emptied and the tangled traffic has cleared. There's a silence directly resulting from the frenzy that peaked in the past few days, ostensibly to mark the birth of the Christ Child. Time now to embrace the silence and to muse on the gift of life taken from villagers far away—as well as on the anger that galvanized Him to throw out the thieves from His Father's temple.



The old man and his Christmas lanterns

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

TODAY, I wish everybody a very Merry Christmas, and thank all those who sent gifts and greetings. May the Lord shower you and your families with His blessings. And may you be happy in all the days to come. Please don't forget the animals, especially the abandoned ones, in your generosity. They are also God's creatures. God did not mean them to be abused and abandoned by humans.

***

Every Christmas, I can't help but recall a strange and sad true story that happened when I was a little boy in primary school. Even now I wonder how it ended.

That wooden barrio school is gone now but at that time it stood beside a small shallow pond over which talisay trees spread their branches. It was from this pond that we fetched water for our vegetable gardens at the back of the school. On the other side of the pond stood a small hut in which lived a strange old man. During recess or before and after classes, we crossed to the other side to visit the old man because he made tops, kites and other toys for us in exchange for our *baon*. When we harvested vegetables, we gave some of them to him.

He lived alone. His wife was dead; he had a grown son but he was off somewhere.

The old man wasn't the talkative type. He answered our questions only very briefly, and we were not very inquisitive. He didn't know where his son was, just that he went somewhere. His gray hair was thinning, his skin sunburned and wrinkled, and he was always barefoot. He must have been in his 60s or 70s.

And here is the strange part: Months before Christmas, he would start making Christmas lanterns. He cut bamboo from a grove and bought Japanese paper with the money we paid him for the toys he made for us. No, he did not sell the lanterns, he gave them away free to his neighbors. Others he hung over the footpath leading to his hut. He had only one condition in exchange for the lanterns: that the neighbors light them up every night during the Christmas season. The hut and the neighboring houses and the path to his hut were a brightly lighted colorful place during the entire Christmas season.

And here is another strange part: The old man did not sleep at night, he slept only during the day. Once during Simbang Gabi, we sneaked to the school to watch him from across the pond. And there he was sitting beside the window looking out to the footpath brightly lighted by his lanterns, as if waiting for somebody. That somebody never came, as far as we know.

Weeks after New Year's Day, when the neighbors started removing their Christmas lanterns, the old man would take down the lanterns over the footpath. Each succeeding year, he looked older, grayer, sadder and more stooped as he did this. But as another Christmas approached, he moved more sprightly and expectantly as he made new lanterns to be given away or hung over the path to his hut. And when the lanterns were lighted, he would revert to his schedule of staying awake at night and sleeping during the day. Night after night, he would sit by his window, watching and waiting, waiting, waiting.

And after each Christmas season, he would take down all the lanterns again, a few each day, as if prolonging the process for as long as possible, as if he didn't want to remove them. And while he did this, he appeared even older and sadder.

We felt so sorry for him. Even after we transferred to the elementary school in town, I continued to visit him occasionally, although the new pupils in the barrio school were his regular visitors and customers.

As another Christmas approached, he appeared younger and happier. But as each season ended and nobody came, the disappointment etched on his face became more pronounced.

Whom was he waiting for? It took us a long time to slowly pry the answer from him. He was waiting for his son who disappeared a long time ago.

Where did he go? I don't know, the old man said. He was always going off somewhere. Sometimes he came home with some friends, stayed a few days and then disappeared again.

One night, he came home and hurriedly packed his bags. "Itay, I will leave for a while," he told his father, "but don't worry about me. I'll be all right. I will be back by Christmas. Wait for me."

"Where are you going?" the old man asked.

"I can't tell you, Itay. But things will be better, you see. Just wait." Then he left and the old man never saw him again.

A few days later, some official-looking people came looking for him but of course the old man could not tell them. He waited for him every Christmas since he said he would come back during Christmas. He lighted up the way to his hut with the lanterns to guide him. It had been many years since his son left, and he might lose his way.

Did the lonely old man see the son he loved again? Did he return one Christmas? I don't know.

The old man is dead now. His hut is gone. Our school is gone. The pond has been filled up, and a new concrete house stands on top of it. The site of our old school is also now filled with houses whose residents never heard of the old man or knew he ever existed.

Where is his son? Did they get him? Is he buried in some unmarked grave somewhere?

The old man lies buried in a grave at the Tugatog cemetery at the boundary of Malabon and Caloocan, still waiting for his son. If the son is still alive, would he please visit his father's lonely grave and put his soul to rest?

Humbug

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

IT'S not the gift, says a radio announcer on FM, it's the giving. Thanks to a busted car CD player (one of the CDs got stuck in the 12-CD rack), which I haven't gotten around to bringing to the repair shop, I've been compelled to listen to the radio on the road, with mixed blessings. The above was one of the platitudes I heard there, but it's not a bad platitude. It's a good reminder amid the flurry of gift-giving, or shopping, of the spirit of the season we're celebrating. It's the worth of the gesture and not the price of the item.

I myself have never been much into gift-giving, and cannot for the life of me comprehend the pressures that come with Christmas, notably having to push and shove through a crowd in a mall to get something for everyone. Life is stressful enough as it is—traffic in particular is a certified vein buster—without having to bow down to this dubious necessity. I do like giving gifts to people I like on occasion just to see the joy in their faces and make them feel special. I don't much like giving gifts to every one I've stood godfather to in weddings and baptisms (they are legion) and that's fair warning to those who intend to conscript me for the purpose. Blessings are pretty much the only thing I can offer you in profusion.

I had the fortune, or misfortune, depending on how you see it, to have been born to hard-up folks and to have spent my childhood in a small community where money wasn't easy to come by and was reserved only for the Big Things. When we were kids, the Big Things included watching movies and procuring such absolute necessities as marbles, rubber bands, and *teks*. The price of a double feature was 15 centavos, which went up to 20 centavos with the introduction of air-conditioning, but not without much uproar from the community, which debated the wisdom of paying more to endure the cold. No, this wasn't prewar, this was late 1950s. The motto then was "Respect the centavo," with reason: You could buy a handful of cheap candy with one centavo.

The reason you didn't need cash all that much was that things could be had without it. Trees grew in abundance along the road where we lived, and fruits groaned from their branches in summer: santol, duhat, guava, atis, mango, you name it. The thought of actually buying fruits was alien to us. The only fruit that seemed deserving of being bought was the apple, which was imported and materialized, like the angel unto Mary, on Christmas. That we found only in the house of a classmate who was well-off, which affirmed his being well-off. I didn't much like it, but this was a case of the emperor's new clothes: not liking it was a sign of provincialism and not having the sophistication to appreciate America's wonders. Apple was more than a fruit, it was status.

There was in fact a lesson there, which I would grasp only later: Value did not create price, price created value. Guava and mango had little value because they were free, apple had much value because it wasn't. That is one of life's perversities, which would be enshrined in the terms of trade between rich and poor countries.

Christmas wasn't a time for gift-giving, it was a time for making Christmas cards and setting up décor in classrooms, notably a Christmas tree stuffed with rolls of cotton and glittering with multicolored bells. And it was a time of legitimate extortion in the form of caroling. Though I can vouch with no small amount of pride that we did not scour the streets seriously expecting gainful employment. For the most part we just found intrinsic, if not sadistic, pleasure in inflicting our voices on hapless dwellers, and were vastly amused at seeing brightly lit houses suddenly turn dark at our approach. On the occasions we did get rewarded for our pains we forthwith applied ourselves to the Big Things, namely watching movies and buying *teks*, which came with bubble gum.

My encounter with gift-giving came only in Manila. I couldn't understand the concept of exchanging gifts, anymore than I could understand the concept of exchanging pleasantries or exchanging passionate kisses. The last two I would understand—and practice—only later. The first I have yet to do, at least with a passion. To this day, I suspect the idea was invented by merchants, with a view to improving traffic in their wares. It's not a bad idea, but when done to a fault, or with compelling ferocity, I don't know that it doesn't encourage commercialism, materialism, or acquisitiveness.

Particularly since these days, people do not like books as gifts, they take them as cursed impositions rather than blessed gratuity. Gifts are things related to cell phones, cars and personal wear, the apples of our time. But acquisitiveness is a tricky thing, it has no bottom. Silas Marner and Scrooge can tell you a thing or two about it. You get bitten by the bug and at some point wealth becomes the sheer presence of plenitude and not its use, pleasure becomes the fact of having rather than the enjoyment of things. You have more, you want more—for its sake. Well, Adam Smith can tell you a thing or two about it too, but that's another story.

One of my favorite Christmas songs is "Little Drummer Boy" because it has a message as old as life itself. A shepherd boy comes to a manger where gifts are strewn at the foot of a child who lies there. The boy realizes this child is special and wants to give him a rich gift as well. But he has nothing, only the clothes on his back on a cold night. And a drum, which I imagine must be made of sheepskin. He plays on his drum and sings, "I am a poor boy too parampampampam, I have no gifts to bring parampampampam, shall I play for you, parampampampam, me and my drum."

To this day, that never fails to give me goose pimples.

Merry Christmas everyone.

Family reunions amid Alert Orange

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

PORTLAND, Oregon—A very merry Christmas to all my readers.

My husband, our son and I flew into this key city in the Pacific Northwest from the small John Wayne Airport in Irvine, California, amid the tightest airport security. My husband had planned for us and our two sons, Buddy and Conrad, to visit with his sister, Juliet Cunanan-Angulo, and her husband, Emmanuel Angulo, in Portland, and from there we are to motor to Seattle to spend Christmas with the Angulo children, Christie and Erwin, who have settled there. Another sister, Perlita Cunanan-Bengzon, was scheduled to fly in from Washington, D.C. where she was visiting earlier.

* * *

But last Sunday, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge heightened the tightness of the security situation by placing the entire United States under "Alert Orange," i.e., "a high threat condition," from the previous "Alert Yellow" or "an elevated threat condition." Ridge said intelligence reports indicated that terrorist attacks on airplanes, ports, malls and other public places could rival and even exceed the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. This made security measures even tighter in US airports. At John Wayne, queues became quite unbearable as the travelers were told to remove their jackets, shoes and belts; empty their pockets; take out their laptop computers for inspection, etc. Officers with police dogs patrolled the airport and the underside of cars were swept electronically. Over the intercom the admonition about unattended luggage to be stowed away and the need to report any strange behavior came every five minutes, it seemed. But travelers seemed to have learned to live with all the hassles and very few complained openly.

* * *

It was the fourth time this year that the Department of Homeland Security ordered a shift from "Yellow" to "Orange." News reports said that in making the announcement Ridge faced a "complex public relations quandary"—how to warn US residents that they could be targets in this peak holiday season even as he urged them to continue enjoying the festivities with their families. "Gather with your family and friends," Ridge said. "We will show the terrorists this holiday season both our goodwill toward our fellow men and our readiness and resolve to protect our families." Despite the warnings, plane tickets were hard to come by as US residents flew home for the traditional Christmas reunion.

* * *

If the people in Portland and environs are worried about their security, they don't show it. Shopping became more frenetic as Christmas drew near, snarling traffic. Interestingly, while the airports are tightly secured, the malls are so open that bag inspection and frisking are unknown here, unlike in Manila. The US economy is frightfully dependent on high consumer spending for the badly needed turnaround, and while store owners admit that business is not as brisk as in other years, the stores are doing everything to cash in on the Christmas shopping, slashing prices as only the fabled American sale goes, and employing gimmicks such as putting discount coupons in newspapers, something Henry Sy and John Gokongwei have not been bold enough to do.

* * *

Cecile Guidote Alvarez and I, and doubtless our listeners across the nation, had an interesting time with National Artist for Literature Alejandro Roces on our dzRH program last Sunday. The erudite Dr. Roces elucidated on various Christmas practices in our country that are rooted in our tradition as against those borrowed from foreign sources. He observed, for instance, that the reason the nine dawn Masses prior to Christmas Day have been held for generations at 4 a.m. is that they were adjusted to the need of the farmers to start working on the fields early, a time marked by the crowing of the cocks and hence the name "*Misa de Gallo.*" He also recalled that the original gift-giving from parents to children generations ago took place during the Feast of the Three Kings, which used to be celebrated on Jan. 6. But apparently that feast has become forgotten perhaps because it has become a movable feast. In fact, said Roces, the only gift-giving on the Feast of the Three Kings now is observed by Casino Español in Manila, which yearly still sends out three men dressed as kings on horseback, distributing gifts. Recalling the Feast of the Holy Innocents, he also said that the present-day "*Niños inocentes*" are the street children who are victims of poverty.

* * *

Roces observed that Christmas has moved away from the religious significance of the birth of Jesus and that the traditional Nativity scene, called *Belen* in Filipino, seems to have disappeared, giving way to the more popular Western symbols such as Santa Claus and the Christmas tree. Even the religious carols of old have given way to more secularized ones. Actually the Christmas Nativity scene began in Mexico as the *posada*, said Roces, or the *panunuluyan* in the Filipino setting. In fact the practice of *kumbancheros* going from house to house singing carols recall the journey of Mary and Joseph knocking from house to house in search of a lodging place. The tradition of hanging the Christmas star or *parol* also began in Mexico with the *luminaria*, which were clay lamps hung from houses to light the way for Mary and Joseph. Roces also pointed out that the Christmas flower called poinsettia, which is so popular in the United States, was once called "*Flor de Noche Buena*" in Mexico where it originated. It was brought to the United States by the American ambassador to Mexico, who was an amateur botanist and has been claimed by America ever since.

Unexpected gifts

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

AS I turned on the computer to write this column, I burst into delighted laughter as I caught sight of my new "wallpaper." It was a picture from our wedding 25 years ago, a black-and-white photo of the hubby and me posing in the gardens of Villa San Miguel. We had used the picture in our invitations for our anniversary, and now it had found its way to my computer screen.

It's a wonderful gift, more so for being unexpected. Quizzing my family members, I found out that my daughter was the "culprit." She was fiddling around with the computer the day before when she found the photo in my files and decided to turn it into "wallpaper." A simple gesture, and for their generation of techno-freaks, no big deal. But for me, a wonderful surprise on a stressful morning. And a reminder that the best gifts are often the ones thought of on the spur of the moment, inspired by a sudden impulse, generated by nothing but a sense of giving and fun. Thank you!

So it is in the spirit of giving that I write this column, what I hope to be an annual Christmas gift to readers: from my family to yours, a listing of our favorite people, places and things. Read on.

* * *

TUESDAY evening, the 23rd. With my sister Chona and her husband Willy, who are visiting from Virginia and spending Christmas at home for the first time in over 10 years, we drop by my brother Nono's home in Cubao to listen to some carolers.

They aren't your average carolers, but the Vox Pacis Male Chorus, who had sung at our anniversary Mass and so delighted our guests that when they asked if they could drop by for caroling, we readily agreed, though we requested that they sing in my brother's home as ours now looks like one big bodega. The Vox Pacis did not disappoint, giving us a musical reminiscence of the Christmas story and of Christmases past. They even obliged our requests, especially "Seasons of Love," from the musical "Rent," with which they closed our anniversary Mass and which, it turns out, is a favorite of theirs as well. They are available for weddings and other events. For bookings, you may catch them every Wednesday at the Edsa Shrine where they sing at the 7 p.m. Mass. Look for Ruel.

* * *

AS you may have guessed by now, food is a major obsession with our family. Here are some of our culinary discoveries in the past year:

For great dates, our son recommends the strip of outdoor cafés on Roxas Boulevard beside the seawall. Apparently, despite the garish "Sputnik" street lights, the place is replete with romance, what with the sea breeze mingling with scent of car exhaust (I'm being cynical here).

One of our favorite things to do in Baguio is to discover new places and reacquaint ourselves with long-time favorites. I've already written about Salud, a new fine-dining place in Lourdes Subdivision where young chef Paul Poblador reigns. We recommend as well the newest outlet of Sizzling Plate in SM Baguio, with its outdoor eating area where one can take in the cool mountain air and the magnificent view while feasting on very reasonably priced steaks. Another old, tested, beloved favorite is Star Café on Session Road, which we never seem able to leave without some egg pie from owners Joey and Donna Rufino. Try out as well the new eateries in Club John Hay, but especially the Starbucks and Country Waffles outlets in the old original cottages in the AIM area. We had breakfast out in the patio of Country Waffles, and I tell you, for ambience there's nothing to beat hot coffee and waffles amid the cool pine-scented air and the gentle sunlight!

The Podium in Ortigas has become a favorite hunting ground, not just because of the hassle-free shopping (or rather, window-shopping), but also because of the great restaurants. Among our favorites: Nina, especially its paella in individual-sized platters; Lolo Mao, especially its spicy squid and the incomparable rum cake; and Goodies 'N Sweets on the ground floor, for great pastries and coffee, and for its hospitality in allowing columnists to sit there for over an hour, composing their pieces, and ordering nothing but Light Coke and coffee.

A favorite food gift this Christmas was a bunch of ripe red tomatoes from Tagaytay, from my husband's friends Marla and Donat. Plucked fresh from the ground, the tomatoes were sweet and flavorful, redolent of sun and fresh air. *Salamat!*

* * *

AND as my final gift to you, my readers, here's the entry for Dec. 23 from the book "Grace for the Moment: Inspirational Thoughts for Each Day of the Year" by Max Lucado. This little book is a gift from my friends Ric and EJ Ramos, and I hope that by reprinting the entry in this space, I would have given them a gift, too.

The entry is entitled "God's Great Gifts," prefaced by a passage from 2 Corinthians: "Thanks be to God for his gift that is too wonderful for words."

"Why did he do it? A shack would have sufficed, but he gave us a mansion. Did he have to give the birds a song and the mountains a peak? Was he required to put stripes on the zebra and the hump on the camel?...Why wrap creation in such splendor? Why go to such trouble to give such gifts?

"Why do you? You do the same. I've seen you searching for a gift. I've seen you stalking the malls and walking the aisles. I'm not talking about the obligatory gifts... I'm talking about that extra-special person and that extra-special gift... Why do you do it?... You do it so the heart will stop. You do it so the jaw will drop. You do it to hear those words of disbelief, 'You did this for me?'

"That's why you do it. And that is why God did it. Next time a sunrise steals your breath or a meadow of flowers leaves you speechless, remain that way. Say nothing and listen as heaven whispers, 'Do you like it? I did it just for you.'"

ET's Christmas crash-landing

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

AN EXTRATERRESTRIAL (ET) crash-landed in Metro Manila several weeks before Christmas Day and was amazed, baffled and aghast by what he saw, heard, learned and discovered.

The INQUIRER played host to the gentle alien from outer space and assigned one of the writers to be its (her/his?) silent tour guide so it could experience the sights and sounds of the city as well as of the countryside.

Just a few hours ago the backpacking duo sat down on a hillock overlooking the city to rest and gaze at the night sky and for a quick Q&A. Human Face (HF) solicited ET's impressions and misimpressions, thoughts and feelings. ET often responded to the INQUIRER's questions with his own questions.

HF: So what do you think?

ET: Is it always like this in the city? People running around, huffing and puffing, like they were racing to get to the finish line?

HF: Not always, it's the Christmas Season, you see. Let me ask, why did you decide to crash-land your space ship on Metro Manila where it's messy?

ET: I saw the bright lights and I thought it must be a happy place. And I could get some help here.

HF: Now, do you think it is a happy place?

ET: It's supposed to be, because it is Christmas. That is what is always said. Now, I can't say. Why, what is Christmas?

HF: Christendom, or those who believe in the teachings of the man we call Jesus Christ, is celebrating the 2003th anniversary of his birth. He was—is—God incarnate: he became one of us. He was killed when he was 33 years of age but he rose from the dead after three days. He's supposed to be ever present, only we can't see. He lived, died and rose again to free us from our sins.

ET: Really, that's hard to believe. Did he come only for earthlings or for us too who live in other places in the universe?

HF: Uh-oh. People talk about the cosmic Christ, but it's better if I just let you read about it, okay?

ET: Christ, so Christmas. Is he the baby doll in that trough surrounded by his parents and those bearded men with farm animals and gifts?

HF: Yes. He chose to be born poor, of a virgin mother. Now don't let me explain the latter or we will run out of time. It is a few hours to deadline. Tintin from the proofreading section texted to say Sir Jorge wants all pieces submitted pronto. All I can tell you now is that this Jesus chose to be born poor and live poor, so he could teach us how to be compassionate to the poor and the suffering. To make this planet a better place.

ET: So why this kind of Christmas preparation and celebration? So excessive. I can't capture the meaning.

HF: Okay, ask...

ET: Why is everybody shopping, shopping, shopping? Is Christmas about shopping? And the traffic is so bad, I saw motorists yelling at each other. While you have "Peace on Earth" in lights everywhere...

HF: Christmas is supposed to be about giving, sharing, remembering. But many earthlings choose to forget how it all started. They equate sharing with shopping, excessive eating and drinking. Those who are not Christians celebrate their own feasts more solemnly, I think. What a shame for us.

ET: Eating? Why, I saw so many people with nothing to eat while others have tables groaning with food. Those who are happy are so very happy while those who are sad are so very sad. It seems Christmas is a cruel season for those who have no one and nothing?

HF: You have to be physically, emotionally and financially strong to cope with the demands of the Christmas season. This is the time when inequality is intensely felt. I wish it weren't like that.

ET: What a waste. But it is so different in the countryside, where people live more simply, where there are not so many lights, where the music is not so loud.

HF: Wait till the shopping centers rise over there. Things could change drastically.

ET: I liked the dawn Masses—in the churches in rural areas. I could feel the solemnity.

HF: Why, what did you observe in the cities?

ET: Many churches looked like any gathering place. Many people either looked distracted or were chatting away. Are churches also shopping centers? So many people are selling stuff. And are shopping centers also churches? Masses are held there too.

HF: You seem baffled and confused.

ET: Is Christmas good or bad?

HF: Good. But not what we made of it.

ET: So what are you doing about it?

HF: Me? I wish I could start something like a Christmas Movement that would bring back the real Christmas. But that is easier said than done. Wish *ko lang*.

ET: I liked seeing families that were happy together, communities that were celebrating, but what about those who have been abandoned and rejected, those who have no one?

HF: As you have observed, those who are happy are so very happy, those who are sad are so very sad. I see, you know what happy means, what sad means. But there are so many other human feelings and they are in various intensities. We have joy, ecstasy, grief, terror...

ET: Those who lost loved ones in the landslide must be full of grief and terror, how will they cope?

HF: I can't begin to fathom their pain. As the great Christian writer C.S. Lewis said, those who say God is good has not been to the dentist.

ET: I saw that those who live on garbage dumps also celebrate the birthday of this Jesus and deck their homes with décor made from scraps.

HF: People like them are supposed to be first on Jesus' list, our list.

ET: So what happened to Christmas?

HF: Something went wrong. But it's not too late to reverse the situation, even in just our own little corner on this planet.

ET: Fighting goes on here.

HF: It's worse in other places on this planet. Make some stopovers before you go home.

ET: Help me go home.

HF: Are you really an ET or someone I know?

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

Christmas paradox

COMMENTARY

Nono Alfonso, S.J.
Institute on Church and Social Issues

IT is no accident that every Christmastime, the political climate in this country is ripe with controversies that serve to dampen the Christmas celebrations. Three years ago, the impeachment trial of Joseph Estrada almost made us lose our appetite for the Yuletide season. This year, we thought that there could be a reprise of that had the impeachment complaint against Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. pushed through. And yet, although this political controversy did not extend to the start of the holiday season, still, many people feel that Christmas this year has lost its glitter. The reason for this, they say, is the start of the election period this month. Christmastime is a season of hope but the present crop of presidential aspirants does not seem to inspire hope in many of us. In fact, doomsayers have started predicting bleak times ahead if this or that candidate wins the elections next year.

And yet the socio-political context surrounding the first Christmas, which was the birth of Christ 2,000 years ago, was not very different from ours. Starting with the ruling king at that time. As we know, Christ was born during the reign of King Herod the Great. According to biblical scholars, he was called "Great" for various reasons. On the positive side, he was great for the many infrastructures he had built in Palestine, including the reconstruction of the Temple of Jerusalem that had been destroyed in Old Testament times. But he was also called "great" because he was feared by his people. He had his sons and any potential rivals to his throne put to death. When he heard that the Messiah was born, Matthew's Gospel tells us, he had the Magi search for the Infant Jesus. And when the Magi did not return to him, he ordered the slaughter of the innocents in the hope that Jesus would be among these.

There is no indication that the President, who is running in the elections next year, will use violence to perpetuate herself in power. And yet her administration's desire to hang on to power reminds us of Herod. King Herod's attempt at conspiracy and deception with the Magi echoes the secret wheeling and dealing that the President has entered into with powerful political blocs. In exchange for the possible support of Eduardo M. Cojuangco in the coming elections, she was widely suspected of allowing the impeachment complaint against Davide. Again, some smelled rotten deals behind her administration's approval of Meralco's bid to increase power rates. Then recently, her offer of amnesty has been met with public cynicism. In her campaign speeches, she speaks about experience and the socio-economic infrastructures she has built for the country. People ask however whether these programs have really benefited the majority.

At the time of Christ, biblical scholars tell us, there were four main groups in Palestine which offered false hopes to the people. The power blocs were the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Although these were religious sects, they carried huge political influence, especially in the Sanhedrin, the highest governing body among the Jews. Many of the Sadducees came from the aristocracy. Their economic interests included the management—or rather mismanagement—of the Temple. Christ would later earn their ire when he challenged their hold on the Temple. The Pharisees, on the other hand, came largely from the middle class and were the guardians of the Law, of the Jewish religion. As such they were known for being legalistic. Throughout his life, Christ would run against them as they would stick to the letter of the law while Christ called for the application of the spirit behind the law, which is love. These two parties formed the leadership structure among the Jews in Christ's time.

It is not difficult to see parallelisms between these parties and the political parties that dominate our political institutions now. In Congress, these parties represent not the interest of the people but their own vested political and economic interests. This is very evident now in the selection of their presidential and vice presidential candidates, for example. Their scramble for and in-fighting over popular candidates betrays not wisdom but political expediency and opportunism.

Lastly there were the "leftist" groups in Christ's time. The Essenes advocated total rejection of what they considered as the corrupt practices of the Jewish faith among the Jews. They opted to live in the deserts on the outskirts of Palestine.

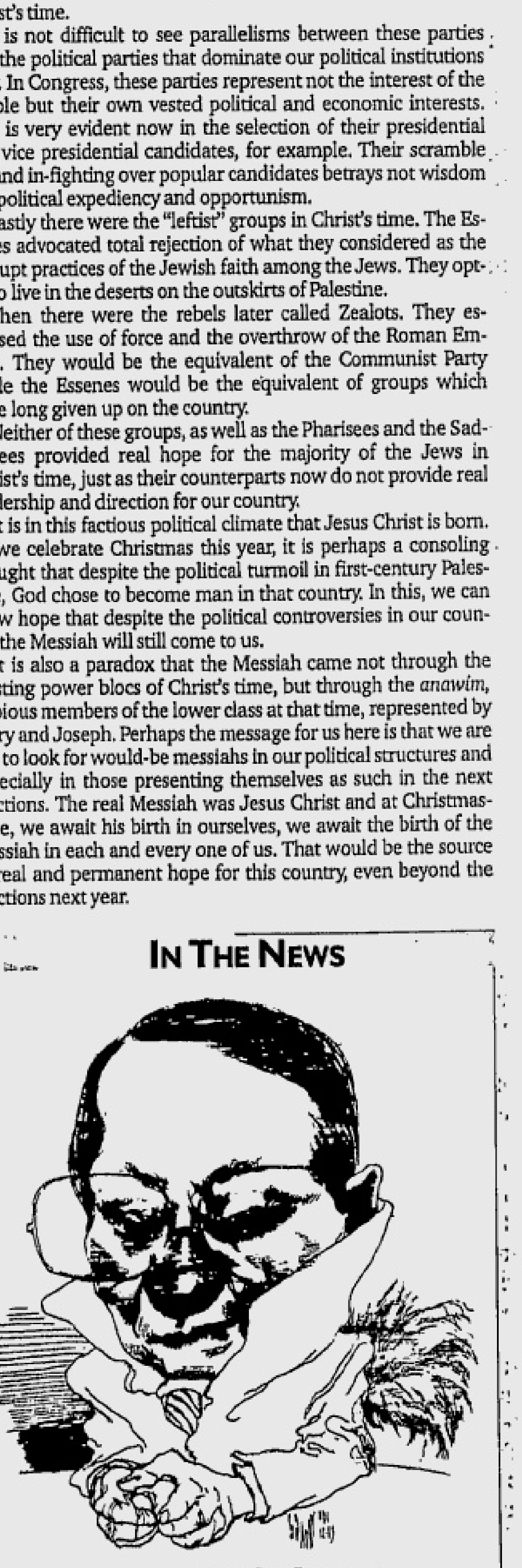
Then there were the rebels later called Zealots. They espoused the use of force and the overthrow of the Roman Empire. They would be the equivalent of the Communist Party while the Essenes would be the equivalent of groups which have long given up on the country.

Neither of these groups, as well as the Pharisees and the Sadducees provided real hope for the majority of the Jews in Christ's time, just as their counterparts now do not provide real leadership and direction for our country.

It is in this factious political climate that Jesus Christ is born. As we celebrate Christmas this year, it is perhaps a consoling thought that despite the political turmoil in first-century Palestine, God chose to become man in that country. In this, we can draw hope that despite the political controversies in our country, the Messiah will still come to us.

It is also a paradox that the Messiah came not through the existing power blocs of Christ's time, but through the *anawim*, or pious members of the lower class at that time, represented by Mary and Joseph. Perhaps the message for us here is that we are not to look for would-be messiahs in our political structures and especially in those presenting themselves as such in the next elections. The real Messiah was Jesus Christ and at Christmastime, we await his birth in ourselves, we await the birth of the messiah in each and every one of us. That would be the source of real and permanent hope for this country, even beyond the elections next year.

IN THE NEWS



Sen. Edgardo Angara

In the fullness of time

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

BIBLICAL scholars generally agree that Jesus Christ wasn't born on Dec. 25. By reconstructing historical events described around Christ's birth, biblical scholars suggest Christ was probably born around autumn, perhaps late in September, rather than during the winter.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church says that it wasn't until the 4th century when Christians set a date for Christ's birthday. Several dates had been proposed, but in the end Dec. 25 was chosen to compete with the Roman (read: pagan) feast of Natalis Solis Invicti, or the "Nativity of the Invincible Sun."

The creation of Christmas as a winter event only underscores how we humans try to make sense of our lives, as we go through the seasons. In parts of the world with four seasons, there is a time starting around November when the days become shorter. We see a bit of that even in a tropical country like the Philippines, with the sun setting as early as 5:30 p.m. As you move farther to the north, the sun sets even earlier and doesn't reappear until late the next day. These "dark days" are known to trigger off depression, sometimes even driving people to suicide.

Fortunately, the long dark days end around Dec. 21 with the winter solstice. It's not surprising that people celebrate as the days begin to lengthen, and that the celebrations should be associated with sun gods.

Adopting Dec. 25 as Christ's birthday generated more powerful metaphors around dark days and light. Christ was born during a very difficult time, a whole historical era that can be compared to "dark days." The Romans had occupied the Jewish homelands. Judaism was in decline, its temple in Jerusalem destroyed and still being rebuilt. Local leaders were lackeys of Roman imperialism, corrupt to the core. It was only natural for the early Christians to project Christ's birth as a turning point, much like the winter solstice.

Like the sun, the new religion was supposed to bring light and hope. Christ and his followers, the early Christians, offered an alternative ethos of equality, with no distinctions made between free men and slaves, between men and women, between Jew and Gentile. Jesus had preached love and mercy as the core of religion, borrowing from the great rabbi Hillel's admonition to do unto others as you would have them do to you.

We take all that for granted, but in Christ's time, especially set against the backdrop of the Roman empire, all this talk of love was radical and dangerous. Sociologist Rodney Stark observes in "The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History" that Roman philosophers saw mercy and pity as signs of moral deficiency. Brute strength was extolled, transformed into sport and spectacle as in combat of gladiators. Early Christians themselves became part of the cruel sport: those who refused to renounce their faith were thrown into pits with wild animals as crowds watched and cheered.

These strange Christians clung tenaciously to this religion of compassion, which characterized their lives as individuals and as communities. It is not surprising that within 200 years after Christ's death, despite severe persecution, Christianity emerged as one of the important religions in the Roman empire, drawing not just the poor and the oppressed but also the middle class, the nobility, philosophers. Stark writes that "Christianity brought a new conception of humanity to a world saturated with capricious cruelty and the vicarious love of death."

Eventually, Christianity became the state religion of the empire, and took on many qualities of the old religions and political systems it had opposed, but that is another story. More important for us today is looking to the past to understand the times we live in, our own dark days of empire and plunder, corruption and penury.

Paul, writing to the Galatians (4:4), reminded them that "when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children."

Paul's reference to the fullness of time reminds us that salvation does not come with Messiahs (and, if I might add, messianic politicians). Christ, "born of a woman, born under the law in order to redeem those who were under the law," did not choose to privilege himself as a grand messiah. It was his simplicity that the early Christians imitated, and which allowed them to overcome the dark days.

It's sad how in this 21st century after Christ, each Christmas seems to carry less goodwill, as we find ourselves harassed, gift-giving transformed into an obligation, no, a burden.

The early Christians were wise in setting Christmas in the winter, after the dark days. Their messages resonate in a haunting traditional Christmas carol, called "In the bleak mid-winter," which starts out by describing the dark days, when "frosty wind made moan, earth stood hard as iron, water like stone." But the heart warms as we hear: "What can I give him poor as I am? If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb. If I were a wise man I would do my part. Yet what I can I give him, give my heart."

I couldn't help linking the lyrics to a passage in a book, "A History of God," by the theologian Karen Armstrong, where she observes that the early Christians expressed their faith in a creed, not so much as a fixed set of propositions than in a "carefully cultivated attitude of commitment." The word *credere*, she explains, was derived from the Latin *cor dare*, meaning to give one's heart. The message is so profoundly simple: If we could just go beyond pious declarations of a change of heart, and begin to give our hearts, we just might find, in these dark days, the fullness of time.

* * *

Comments to miguel@pinoykasi.net

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The season of Christmas giving

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER LETTERS

IN O. HENRY'S "The Gift of the Magi," an impoverished wife sells her hair at Christmastime to buy a chain for her husband's gold watch, only to discover that he sold his prized watch to buy her tortoise-shell combs for her hair. Although the items given turned out useless, the recipients were nevertheless overjoyed because the willingness to give at a cost is, itself, a precious gift.

I am writing because I was not amused at J.R. Victorio's "Ten dreaded Christmas gifts" which was published in the 2BU! section. (PDI, 12/2/03) The writer may have thought he was being funny, but I thought his article was insensitive to those who give "uncreative" gifts or hand-me downs not because they are thoughtless but because those are the only gifts they can afford. He came across a brat whining about not receiving what he wanted. Furthermore, the article sends the message to young readers that Christmas is about gifts rather than about giving.

As children, we were always taught to smile and appreciate the gifts we receive. Are kids still being taught this?

If Victorio's message were simply "Select gifts thoughtfully," he could have written guidelines on how to choose the right gift or how to personalize them or how to discern what people like (for example, pay attention to what they've been talking about lately, take note of their favorites, hobbies, ask around, observe what they usually wear, etc.). He did not have to hurt people's feelings and cheapen the gift-giving custom to drive home his point.

God loves a grateful receiver as much as He loves a cheerful giver.

—CRISTINA A. MONTES,
30 Nottingham St.,
Hillsborough, Alabang,
Muntinlupa City

Not IRRI's opinions

PLEASE allow me to clarify recent reporting of comments by International Rice Research Institute economist, Dr. David Dawe, on rice self-sufficiency in the Philippines.

In many versions of this story, it is being said that IRRI is questioning the Philippines' right to be self-sufficient in rice. This is simply not correct.

In all of IRRI's 43 years in the Philippines, we have never questioned the right of the Philippines to be self-sufficient in rice and we have worked very hard to support government policies focused on this goal. Before the establishment of the Philippine Rice Research Institute in 1985, IRRI worked with local rice breeders to develop modern high-yielding efforts to provide important new technologies—such as hybrid rice—to local farmers.

However, just like the Philippines, we believe strongly in free speech and so allow all our scientists to express their opinions and views without restriction. I personally heard Dawe's comments to the media, and they, in no way, suggested that IRRI was questioning the policies of any Filipino government, or the right of this country to achieve rice self-sufficiency. In fact, as reported in at least one local paper, Dawe explicitly said, "the decision regarding self-sufficiency needs to be made by Filipinos."

He merely made some personal comments concerning possible alternatives to self-sufficiency, and tried to explain why it has been so hard to achieve self-sufficiency in the Philippines. It is unfortunate that such personal views are now being misrepresented by some local headline writers as the opinions of IRRI. They are not.

—RONALD P. CANTRELL,
director general,
International Rice Research
Institute, Suite 1009,
6776 Ayala Avenue, Makati City

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Stealth hovers over Baguio casino launch

BAGUIO CITY—Investors of a controversial casino in a mountain resort here will test the waters on New Year's Day when they hold a "soft opening" for selected guests at the Camp John Hay special economic zone, sources told the INQUIRER.

Royal Highlands, a gaming firm, has decided to operate its baccarat tables at the Mountain Breeze, a former chapel and later a cinema house inside Camp John Hay.

Gina Alvarez, senior vice president of the Camp John Hay Development Authority (CJHDevco), said Royal Highlands is still negotiating its contracts with CJHDevco and the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA).

CJHDevco is the leaseholder of over 290 hectares of the former American base land and has control over its use.

BCDA, the INQUIRER learned, had been seeking additional terms that would require the casino operator to pay BCDA a percentage from its gross winnings.

Royal Highlands owes the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) the same percentile share from its casino gross take as one of its gaming franchise holders, "on top of the annual rent it must pay CJHDevco," Alvarez said.

All these negotiations hit a snag because of a Supreme Court ruling in October that removed Camp John Hay's tax exemptions and benefits, she added.

The tribunal pointed out that former President Fidel Ramos had no authority to prescribe tax immunities to any economic zone.

Ramos issued in 1994 Proclamation No. 420 covering the John Hay economic zone, which was the first BCDA zone to be created after the Subic Bay Freeport and the Clark special economic zone.

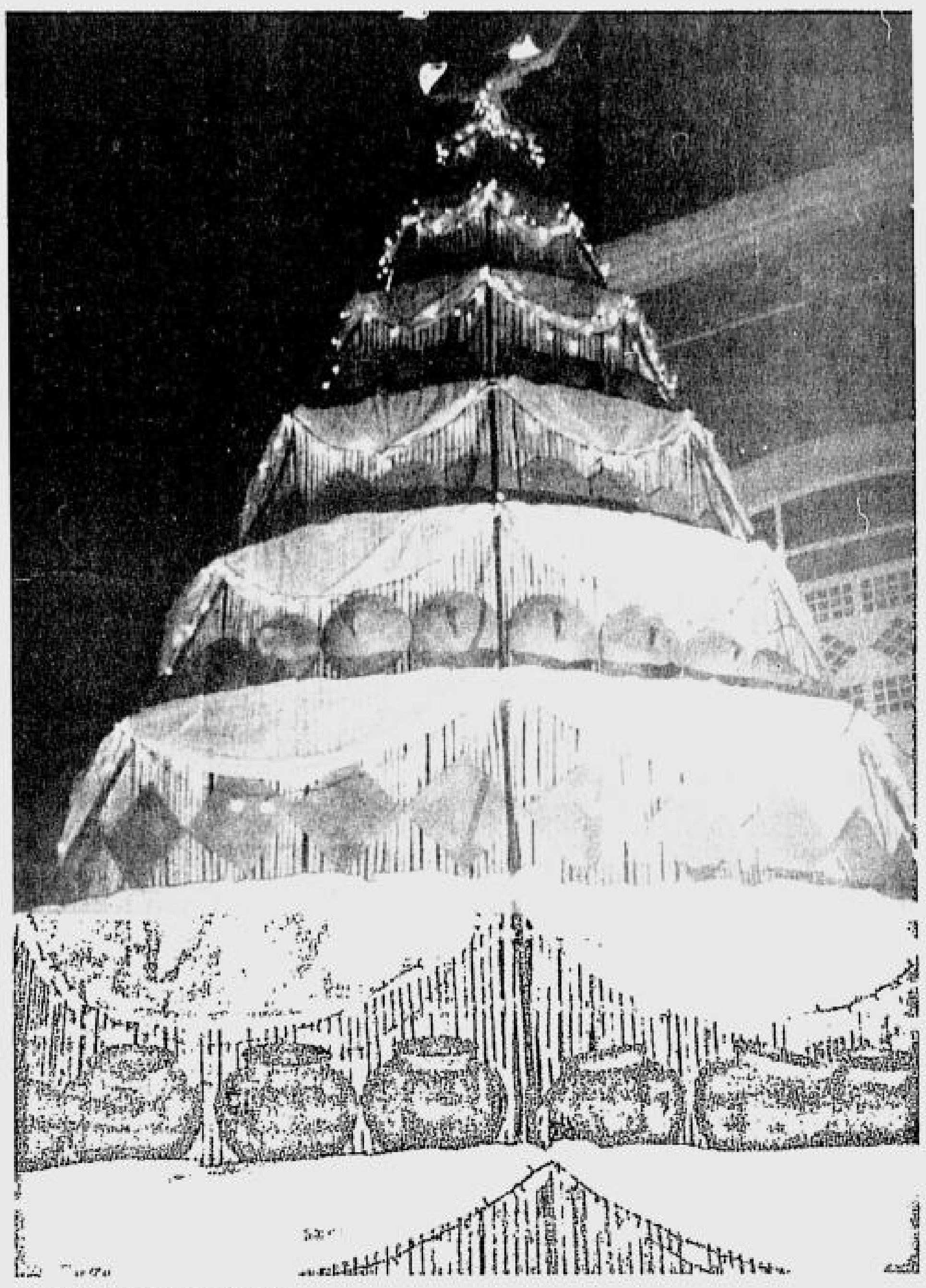
"All of (Royal Highland's) financial projections were anchored on the 5-percent tax it is guaranteed under (Proclamation 420), so all of its investment forecasts will have to be recomputed," Alvarez said.

The casino operator had also frozen the transfer of gaming equipment because it was expecting to sign up these machinery for the economic zone's standard import duty exemptions, she added.

Meanwhile, pastoral letters of several churches here have asked the faithful to reject seven city councilors who approved a resolution reversing a policy that barred Camp John Hay from operating a casino.

An ecumenical council, composed of the Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, and the Baptist Church, has opposed the John Hay casino.

While a court has upheld the legality of the casino, protests are expected to mount once the casino operations start to become regular. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*



NATIVE CHRISTMAS

LEONCIO BALBIN JR./PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

The Filipino's ingenuity comes to fore again as a tree decorated with native products takes shape in Vigan.

Male fire fatality's body remains unclaimed

BAGUIO CITY—A sad footnote to Christmas is a photograph of a young man on horseback in Mines View Park here. The horse has a name. It is the man who remains unidentified, two weeks after he and seven of his companions, died of asphyxiation from a nightclub fire here.

The man known only as Edcel remains at the morgue of La Funeraria Paz on Naguilian Road. A worker there said Edcel would remain there for three months if no one can positively identify him.

Edcel was said to be five-foot, four inches (62.56 centimeters) tall and medium-built. He was estimated to be between 24 and 26 years old and was described as gay by his former ward.

Edcel, five members of the M & M International Dancers and two others were killed in the fire that hit the Perutz Nightclub here on Dec. 11.

The M & M dancers arrived in Baguio on Nov. 30 and were working in Perutz for only 10 days when the fire struck. Their papers, which could have established their identities, were being processed at the time of their death. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

STOP
PNP/COMELEC
CHECKPOINT

CHOKEPOINT

PHOTO FROM NAKTF

The National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktf) seeks to assure the safety of citizens these holidays with the setting up of so-called chokepoints such as this one in Sta. Rosa, Laguna manned briefly by Naktf chief Angelo Reyes and top police officials.

Swiss sued for offering bribe to cop exec

BAGUIO CITY—A Swiss has been sued here for bribery after he offered P200 to the Baguio police director, whom the foreigner mistook for a traffic policeman.

Pulled over for a traffic violation on Saturday, Arthur Feh, 69, reportedly tried to offer the money to Supt. Francisco Manalo Jr., Baguio police director, in exchange for letting him off.

Feh's car almost hit Manalo's service car along a stretch near the Baguio City Hall. Manalo said Feh "was driving recklessly."

"I stepped out of the car and admonished him. I identified myself only as a police officer, and ordered him to pull over to the side of the street while I waited for a regular traffic police officer to cite him for the violation," Manalo said.

He said Feh had not argued with him, "but he (Feh) kept saying that traffic policemen could be easily persuaded to drop minor charges like this."

"I was furious because he suggested that it was easy for (foreigners like him) to bribe the ordinary police officer. I was actually ready to just let him go, but when he pulled out the P200, I was terribly offended," Manalo said. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

DAR sets inventory of projects for funds

BAGUIO CITY—A top official of the Department of Agrarian Reform asked provincial agrarian reform officers to inventory projects in all barangays that will be funded by the Marcoses' ill-gotten wealth.

Agrarian Reform Undersecretary Jose Mari Ponce said with the final ruling of the Supreme Court on the P38-million Marcos wealth, the provincial agrarian reform office secretariat can endorse the release of funds to implement programs and projects under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

"Based on (Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto) Pagdanganan's directive, all barangays nationwide shall be allocated an average amount of P200,000 for projects, priority of which are potable water supply and solar driers," Ponce said in a memorandum.

Franklin Cocoy, director for operations of the regional DAR, said the money from the Marcos wealth would solve the funding woes of agrarian reform projects. Most of these projects are financed by foreign agencies.

Cocoy said DAR projects in at least 50 villages in Cordillera are expected to receive funds from the Marcos wealth.

He said among the priorities are livelihood and infrastructure projects. *Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

2 Filipinos win Koran reading contest prizes

COTABATO CITY—Two Muslim Filipinos won the second place in the recently concluded 44th International Quran Reading Competition held in Kuala Lumpur.

Engineer Zamsamin Ampatuan, head of the Office of Muslim Affairs, said Mohammad Uka of Pagadian City was second place in the men's category while his colleague, Rahna Zacaria, also got the second place in the female category.

Ampatuan said the feat is enough to make Filipinos and the country proud of its culture, especially in Mindanao where the two winners came from.

"We are proud of our achievement," Ampatuan told the INQUIRER, adding that about 100 contestants participated in the annual reading competition.

Indonesia's Ahmad Khairi Lubis won the first place while Malaysia's Ahmad Faizal bin Ghazali bagged the championship plum.

In last year's competition, the Philippines landed in fourth place while the champion was Malaysia.

In the female category, Hannisah Abdullah of Malaysia won the first place while Indonesia's Djihada Badar won the highest prize.

"We are improving and maybe next year, we could win the championship title," the optimistic Ampatuan said.

No less than Malaysia's King Yang de Pertuan Agong Syed Sirajudin Jamalullail and Malaysian Prime Minister Syed Ahmad Badawi awarded the prizes to the successful Quran readers. *Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Ex-peasant leader slain in Laguna town

By Marlon Ramos and Clarice Colting
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

BAY, Laguna—A lone gunman shot dead a former peasant leader in front of his house here, gripping this town with fear.

Romy Malabanan, 43, who was appointed executive assistant of town Mayor Edwin Ramos, was waiting for a ride to the municipal hall outside his house when a man armed with a .45 cal. pistol casually walked up to him and fired a single shot.

Malabanan was the secretary general of Bayan Muna in Bay and was chair of the provincial peasant organization Pagkakaisa at Ugnayan ng mga Magsasaka sa Laguna (Pumalag) and an executive committee member of regional peasant organization Kalipunan 'ng Samahang Magbubukid sa Timog Katagalugan (Kasama-TK) until 2001.

Chief Insp. Nestor de la Cueva, town police chief, said three of his men aboard a patrol car heard the gunshot and proceeded to the crime scene.

Police gave chase to no avail.

Another suspect, believed to be a lookout, fled in a motorcycle.

"This is clearly politically motivated, another obvious case of political repression," said Alex Orias, chair of Pumalag.

Incumbent Mayor Edwin Ramos' camp is said to have been receiving threats after his uncle and former town Mayor Bruno Ramos announced his intention to run for mayor.

Malabanan is said to have been very instrumental in the mayor's successful campaign in 2001.

Some residents said the older Ramos tried but failed to convince his nephew to let him run unopposed.

Doubts linger over cops' claim on war on 'jueteng'

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—What jueteng-free Christmas?

The reality in the field and claims by top police officials that the illicit numbers game had stopped hardly matched what's happening in many cities and towns of Central Luzon.

On Christmas Eve, jueteng went on in Pampanga's 20 towns and two cities, INQUIRER sources said. In the City of San Fernando, the sources said jueteng operations run by "RR" and "Mario" held draws on Wednesday.

However, the police directors of San Fernando and Angeles cities and the towns of Arayat, Apalit, Bacolor, Mexico, Mabalacat, Magalang, Minalin, Sto. Tomas, Floridablanca, Candaba, Masantol, Sasmuan, San Simon, San Luis, Porac, Lubao and Guagua had declared their areas "cleared" of jueteng since Dec. 20, copies of a certification showed.

The "jueteng-free" status was likewise given to at least 64 towns and cities in Aurora, Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac and Zambales, copies of a certification obtained by the INQUIRER from this regional police camp showed. There are 122 towns and cities in Central Luzon.

Police and civilian sources in those provinces, however, doubted the claim.

The signatures of mayors, parish priests, pastors, lay leaders or civic leaders were seen in the certifications.

Fr. Deogracias Galang, executive director of the Social Action Center of Pampanga, said they would ask the 11 Catholic priests in the province to confirm the authenticity of their signatures or to verify if the jueteng-free status was true.

Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, Central Luzon police director, has not yet declared the region cleared of jueteng.

But Querol said "the fight is on" and that it is "gaining headway."

In his Dec. 22 memorandum to the Philippine National Police headquarters in Camp Crame, Querol said his office was "currently monitoring the possible resurgence" of jueteng and that "aggressive police operations will be conducted immediately" if their monitoring showed that jueteng operations are ongoing.

Local police officials said "guerrilla-type" jueteng operations still exist in their areas.

Vice Gov. Juan Miguel Arroyo, the chair of the anti-illegal gambling task force in Pampanga, has also not yet declared the province jueteng-free.

Some residents in the region raised doubts on the seriousness of the police's campaign to stop jueteng.

"The police and the President cannot stop jueteng because the campaign is only a political propaganda. Jueteng continues in Bataan," according to Joe Galvez, a photographer in Bagac town.

"I doubt if they can stop it especially now that the election is near," Filomena Sanchez, a teacher in the City of San Fernando, said.

Aside from giving monthly protection money, jueteng financiers also reportedly contribute to the campaign coffers of politicians.

Fr. Ed Panlilio, parish priest of Guagua town, said, "If the present administration is serious (in stopping jueteng), it can."

Nina Saplala, co-chair of the Regional Development Council, said the police appeared "not serious" because "they too are believed to be benefiting from jueteng."

"No one believes in the jueteng campaign by the PNP because it has never led to the arrest of any of the gambling lords," said former Pampanga Rep. Emigdio Lingad.

Msgr Francisco Lansang, ecclesiastical governor of the Archdiocese of San Fernando, Pampanga, said the government was "not really serious about cutting down" jueteng in the President's home province.

"The very people who are in charge of stopping jueteng are the beneficiaries themselves," Lansang said. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

E-mail: pr_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

Christmas house brings joy to poor of Naga City

By Juan Escandor Jr.
Naga City

AMID hard times, a fully decorated house along a national road in Naga City not only grabs attention from passers-by but also brings joy to poor people, especially children, who hardly feel the spirit of Christmas.

EVERY night, people from Naga City make it a point to pass by Cu's house to see the colorful Christmas decors. JUAN ESCANDOR JR.

The house of banker Fidel Cu, dressed up to the hilt with Christmas lights and decors, has been the main attraction in the city since the first week of December. Droves of poor families visit the house every night to amuse themselves with the decorations.

Arnel Lizardo, a laborer, brought his three children on Friday night after a back-breaking day if only to give them a taste of the holiday season. He said the visit made up for the bareness of their dwelling this season.

"Watching the decorations gives me the feeling that this is Christmas time. In fact, we have been here for more than an hour and my kids are still enjoying hanging around," Lizardo said in Bicol.

In front of Cu's house is that of Santa Claus, which visitors are allowed to enter. Children can touch the three Santas, sit beside them, ride on the back of the reindeer, and take some pictures for souvenirs.

Josie Aninipot, a bank employee, brought along her daughter, who was so amazed at the setting inside Santa's house. Santa seems to rest warmly and happily in front of a virtual fireplace.

Aninipot said she was glad there is such a house in the small city this Christmas season.

Except for the Christmas trees mounted in two small parks at the central business district, some lights on a number of trees and lanterns hanging in the light posts, the city is bare.

Tradition

Cu started the tradition of decorating his house in 1997, which turned out to be a big hit with passers-by. Since then, people have crowded in front of his house every night during the holidays to appreciate the decors.

"It started as a hobby of my daughter-in-law in her first year with us. Now, it has become a tradition, not only for our family but for the people here," Cu said.

He said the tradition was "a way of giving back their blessings" to the poor in the city. His family has also put up a foundation to engage in charitable and humanitarian work among the poor.

Health services

Cu, who owns G7 bank, the third largest rural bank in the country, founded the FLC Foundation Inc. on Jan. 21, 2002 to deliver health services to the poor.

In partnership with local governments, nongovernment organizations and national government agencies, the foundation has served some 6,000 poor patients in Camarines Sur and Albay this year.

General and pediatric medical services, free medicines and vitamin supplements, deworming and lectures on health care, personal hygiene and sanitation were among the services the foundation has rendered for the poor in Daraga, Polangui, Milaor, Bula, Nabua, Bombon and Caramoan towns, and in Naga, Legazpi, Tabaco, Iriga and Ligao cities.

The foundation has launched a wheelchair donation program for persons stricken with debilitating illnesses, such as polio and rheumatoid arthritis. So far, it has given away 40 wheelchairs.

This year, it started getting involved in environmental campaign with its Project Greenplan. The drive aims to raise public awareness of the need to balance development and ecology.

Cu said the tradition of lighting up his house every Christmas season follows the humanitarian philosophy of the FLC Foundation, in which the light symbolizes hope for everyone.

"We desire one thing with the symbols we mount in our house every Christmas season. That is, imparting a blessing of hope to the community amidst a growing desolation. Through the tradition of lighting up our whole house, we hope to give the message that there must be a better life ahead of us if we could only see things in the light," he said.

A SEASON OF SHARING

Bonding with poor special children

By Gil Francis G. Arevalo
Legazpi City

FOR THE first time in their young lives, Jay Malate, 15, and Lileth Monreal, 12, both of Daraga, Albay, were able to watch Walt Disney's cartoons, "Little Mermaid" and "Mulan," and the Hollywood blockbuster movie "Batman."

PHYSICALLY and mentally handicapped children spell out the word Christmas. NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

It was no ordinary December day. It was a day packed with activities by sponsors who adopted them in a program dubbed "Invite a Child to your Home," which was organized by the Simon of Cyrene Children's Rehabilitation and Development Foundation Inc. (SCCRDFI).

The non-profit organization says it is committed to the physical, educational and vocational rehabilitation, as well as social integration of persons with disabilities. Founded in 1982 by the Parish Council of Daraga and the Lingap Pangkabataan Inc., the organization serves children and adults with disabilities.

Last week, the foundation launched the project "Krismas para sa may K—mula sa puso para sa taong may kapansanan" at the Pacific Mall in Legazpi City's downtown area.

Jay and Lileth were among at least 150 indigent special children who were given special gifts and concern by the foundation and some benefactors. The "Invite a Child to your Home" program sets a special date with a 10 to 15-year-old child with disability for eight hours. Varied activities are prepared by the sponsor who invites a child.

At 15, Jay is still in Grade 5 [boys his age should normally be in secondary school], while Lileth had to stop schooling from time to time because of her condition.

The two come from poor families who live in far-flung areas, where keeping abreast with current events and watching popular shows are rare times.

Disabled kids

They could never imagine that even just for eight hours, they would be accorded a warm welcome, gifts, a surprise Christmas party, a mini-tour to the best children's places in Albay, and interaction with other children.

Jay is suffering from tuberculous osteomyelitis, a disease which destroys the vertebrae. It is his spine which suffers most, ever since he had an accident when he was 5 years old.

Lileth has difficulty speaking and walking, but her guardians in the SCCRDFI said it could be cured.

The two have been SCCRDFI beneficiaries since 1998.

Jay and Lileth were the "special guests" of the Lorete family on Dec. 18. Imelda Lorete, 66, a businesswoman who owns B Plus Feeds in Daraga, said they prepared a "semi-grand" reception for the two special children.

"The food were really good. Some of them, I had not tasted [before]. They also gave us gifts like clothes and toys, and apples for my brothers and sisters," Jay said in Bicol.

"I never thought twice about inviting these two children in our house when Simon of Cyrene had this activity because I believed there were a lot of values imparted and it was a memorable experience. I was overjoyed. Even my 4-year-old grandson was very happy playing and having fun with Jay and Lileth," Lorete said.

Commitment

"It would be my commitment to welcome them at least once a year. My grandson learned a lot of values here," she added.

Jay confessed that he cried after the experience because he said he would surely miss Lorenzo, and there was nothing definite when they would see each other again.

"In a short time, Lorenzo had endeared himself to Lileth and me. Of course, I was very happy because he was with us in eating, watching cartoons, playing and going around. I cannot forget the experience," he said, almost in tears.

The contract states that the sponsor can pick up the child at 9 a.m. at the SCCRDFI office and return the child before 5 p.m. of the same day. But in the case of Jay and Lileth, it took them up to seven in the evening.

The reason? Lorenzo wanted them to stay a little longer.

Jay said he and Lileth felt they were really a part of the Lorete family. From the time they were picked up from the SCCRDFI office, Lorete brought them to the Pacific Mall in the city proper where they went shopping and still had more time to play.

They watched movies, slept together, visited the Wildlife Park in Albay, ate in a restaurant, played in the recreation center at the mall, and mingled with other children during a late afternoon Christmas party.

"Of course, we wanted them to feel special during the Christmas party because even some of my visitors and guests had a warm welcome and regard for them since they were good and very special to us. It was not only us who made them happy, but they too brought joy and unforgettable moments with us. Jay and Lileth will be always part of our family, though this is just once every year, and only for eight hours," Lorete said.

Other activities of the SCCRDFI are the "Donate a Wheelchair," in which several disabled people in Albay were given wheelchairs; "Share Books, School materials and Toys" for special education centers; and giving Christmas cheers, food packages and cash to chosen recipients.

But it is the "Invite a Child" that makes the annual project of the foundation more memorable and inspiring.

Witnesses really found it heartening and illuminating, since even their children wanted to play and have fun with their special guests.

Talents like dancing, singing, acting and playing instruments astoundingly come out of the special children.

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Christmas with street children

By Jofelle P. Tesorio
Puerto Princesa City

TEN-YEAR-OLD Mandaluyong has always believed in Santa Claus. He has only one simple wish this Christmas: to go to school.

Coming from a poor Badjao family in Puerto Princesa City, Mandaluyong stopped attending school when he was in Grade 2. His parents could no longer afford to send him or any of his two siblings to school.

The boy's father is a fisherman who gets a share of the catch whenever he goes out with other boat owners. Mandaluyong had no choice but to find a living to help the family.

At a very young age, Mandaluyong looks like a man trapped in a child's body with his skinhead. He is actually very shy. He doesn't know where his name originated.

Everyday, he could be seen in the cathedral waiting for parishioners for alms. The money (P20-P30 a day) he earns buys food for the family.

When not in the streets begging, Mandaluyong takes care of his blind mother.

Social welfare officer Dolores Gatpandan said the city had about 30 street children and 70 child vendors.

Mandaluyong's family is one of the clients of the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO), Gatpandan said. She said her office had been trying to help the family find an alternative livelihood to keep the children out of the streets.

For four years now and every Christmas, the Puerto Princesa "Peacock" Jaycees grants small but meaningful wishes to children like Mandaluyong. The project goes until such time that the street children would no longer ask for alms.

According to Peacock Jaycees president Margie Lagrada, the "Share-Home-Adopt-a-Child and Family Project" was conceptualized in response to the increasing number of street children.

"Christmas is supposed to be for children. Other children are lucky enough to have what they want, but there are a number of them who don't even have a decent meal during Christmas," she said.

With the help of the CSWDO, the Peacock Jaycees identifies children and families who would benefit from the project. They gather about 70 street children in the afternoon of Dec. 24 and assign each child to foster families who voluntarily adopt the child.

The child spends Christmas eve with a foster family up to the afternoon of Christmas Day. They reunite with their biological parents for a children's party complete with mascots, parlor games, storytelling sessions, singing and dancing.

Since its inception, the project has helped other children not only during Christmas but even beyond.

Some children have already bonded with their foster families and were given scholarships so they could continue studying.

Teng Formoso, the project chair, said that while it might be a short-term program, the members hoped that with their little endeavor, they have shared love with the children and inspired them to strive harder in their lives.

METRO

Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

FOUR DIGIT
8 4 4 8
(In exact order)

SUERTRES
9 9 7

MEGALOTTO 6/45
1 7 10 20 32 39

Water supply restored

By Tina Santos

METRO Manila and Cavite residents affected by the sudden cutoff of water service last Sunday got an early gift from the Maynilad Water Services Inc.

Water supply in most parts of Parañaque, Las Piñas, and Bacoor and Imus towns in Cavite resumed Tuesday, a day ahead of Wednesday's scheduled completion of repair work on a damaged main line.

The 1,100-mm main line was punctured as workers conducted pile-driving activities for a footbridge at the corner of Naia and Coastal Road in Parañaque.

Repair teams worked round-the-clock to patch up a 1.8 meter by 1.2 meter hole in the pipe.

However, Maynilad officials seemed not in Christmas mood as they claimed that the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), which is undertaking the project, did not coordinate with them regarding the footbridge project.

Maynilad issued the statement debunking the allegation of MMDA deputy chair Danny Lacuna that the water company did not provide accurate information regarding its pipelines at the work site.

Maynilad program management head Romy Posadas said the MMDA engineering staff had sought a meeting on the project but the meeting never took place until the accident happened.

THE LEAD actors of the film "Crying Ladies" (left) are all smiles during the parade of floats that ran the length of Roxas Blvd., from the Cultural Center of the Philippines Complex to the Quirino Grandstand in Luneta. At left, "Mano Po" stars Susan Roces and Judy Ann Santos, atop a float that costs P900,000.

JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

Parade of stars snarls Metro traffic, bumps off TV show

By Margaux Ortiz, Edson Tandoc Jr. and Jocelyn Valle, contributor

THE "NICKELODEON" show on RPN-9 was preempted yesterday by the live coverage of the Parade of Stars, which should have ended at 5:30 p.m. but went on for at least another hour, according to Wilson Tieng, member of the executive committee of the Metro Manila Film Festival 2003.

The annual parade, which featured the lead stars of the entries to the MMFF, also snarled traffic in parts of the metropolis. It kicked off at the Cultural Center of the Philippines grounds and went around the eastern part of the national road before ending at the Quirino Grandstand at the Luneta Park.

A cash prize of P75,000 awaits the best float. The winner will be announced at the awards night on Dec. 27 at the PICC Plenary Hall. Some of the floats cost more to produce, like Regal Films' "Mano Po 2's," showcase, which supposedly cost P900,000 to construct.

Some of the biggest stars in show biz, who appear in the festival entries, rode on the floats.

Susan Roces, Christopher de Leon, ZsaZsa Padilla and Judy Ann Santos, stars of "Mano Po 2," rode on a float made out to look like a Chinese temple. Another Chinese temple was also the motif of "Crying Ladies," whose lead stars led by Sharon Cuneta were on the float. "Filipinas'" float recreated a typical Filipino home complete with a Christmas tree. "Homecoming" recreated a town fiesta, including the lechon and majorettes.

MMFF Chair and Metro Manila Development Authority Bayani Fernando yesterday expressed hope that this year's festival will earn more than the 2002 MMFF.

"We intend to top last year's total earnings of P350 million," Fernando told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

Caloocan City mayor and festival selection committee head Rey Malonzo yesterday told INQUIRER that moviegoers would be treated to a wide selection of "outstanding movies much better than the films in the previous festivals."

He earlier predicted that this year's festival would be the biggest and most successful ever both in the quality of the entries and in the box office.

No prison bar can keep this family apart

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

NOT EVEN the cold bars of the Caloocan City Jail could stop the Sabay family from celebrating Christmas together.

As early as yesterday noon, Rita Sabay, 47, and her two daughters were at the jail spending the day with her husband Darryl, 40.

Darryl was arrested in May for an alleged drug-related offense.

"*Malungkot kami. Pero ganyan talaga. Ang mahalaga magkasama pa rin kami* (We feel sad but life is like that. What's important is that we can still be together.)," Rita told the INQUIRER.

She is just one of the wives, husbands, children, parents and relatives who trooped yesterday to the different jails and detention centers in Metro Manila to be with their detained loved ones this Christmas.

At the Caloocan City Jail, the INQUIRER came upon jailguards, inmates and their relatives preparing for a Christmas party.

Rita cooked *pansit* and *biko* (native rice cake) for her husband.

She said families of the other detainees would also be bringing food, which all of them would share and partake at noche buena inside the jail.

A jailguard told the INQUIRER that they decided to allow relatives of detainees to spend noche buena inside the jail as a Christmas gift to the inmates.

A donation box was put at the jail's entrance, which another jail policeman said was for the inmates' Christmas party.

Jail authorities hope that the activity would dissuade detainees from thinking about breaking out of jail due to homesickness.

Funny and not-so-funny text msgs

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

SINCE it's Christmas, we are dispensing with criticisms for which this space is known, or notorious, depending on which side of the fence you are on. And since Christmas is merry-making, let's be merry.

I'm printing here some text messages I've received this Yuletide season. Some are downright funny, others corny, and still others, while humorous, are sarcastic.

Here they are:

When politicians make a joke it becomes a law; but when they make a law it becomes a joke. Maybe because when we voted for them we were just kidding.

* * *

Think u r having a bad day? I lent a guy P1 million for plastic surgery, and now I don't know what he looks like.

* * *

A man greets his wife at the airport. Seeing his long face, she asks, "What's the matter? You look so sad. I thot you'd be glad to see me. Look how happy dat couple is kissing and laughing.

Her husband ansers, "dat's bcoz he's seeing her off, not picking her up."

* * *

Ito regalo ko sa original Mr. Suave. Naway pataas ng pataas ang iyong grasya, pababa ng pababa ang uric at blood pressure mo, at umabot ka pa ng edad ocho-ocho.

* * *

GMA's campaign song: To dream the impossible dream, to fight the unbeatable Poe, to bear with unbearable Roco, to run where the gay Ping not go.

* * *

Pareng Mon, may you continue to endure the hardships of being attractive to women and have the moral strength to resist them!

* * *

Just recvd d package. Thank u sa Christmas gift mo sa akin. Ikaw ha! Nag-abala ka pa. Ang ganda talaga. I really like it.

Practice lang! Malay mo, magka-2-2-O.

* * *

Ikaw ha! You never told me about this very beautiful woman I met yesterday. Sabi niya nakalimutan mo na raw siya after having had an intimate relationship with her.

Tawagan mo raw siya sa (I forget now the phone number-RT). She's waiting for your call.

(When I called up the number, it was the National Center for Mental Health-RT).

* * *

Friends, this Christmas I will never forget those who have forgotten me.

* * *

i askd an angel to watch over u. but he came back sooner than xpected. i askd why, he smiled n said: "Hmmmp! hindi angel ang kelangan niyan."

* * *

Wishing you not only romance, but erotic seduction, not just sex, but sheer ecstasy, and not just sensation, but multiple orgasms. Kung kaya mo pa!

* * *

Ho! Ho! Ho! Merry Christmas to all.

METROBRIEFS

Fires in QC

FIRES broke out in two residential areas in Quezon City on Tuesday, destroying millions of pesos in property. The first fire, which reached Task Force Alpha alarm, started in a house on Sta. Maria Street, Barangay Holy Spirit at 5:17 p.m., arson investigators said. The fire, which quickly spread to 15 other houses, was contained at 8:19 p.m. An hour later, several families were rendered homeless when another fire hit the houses on Natividad Street corner Del Monte and West Avenue, Quezon City. The second fire, which reached Task Force Bravo, started at 9:03 p.m. and was put out about an hour and a half later. *Tina Santos*

Stabbed over P20

JORGE Canonce Jr., an architect's assistant, on Tuesday night was stabbed and wounded in Makati City for failing to pay a P20 debt. Canonce, 22, of Barangay Bangkal, Makati, had just received his Christmas bonus and was drinking with his cousin in a convenience store on Evangelista Street when he met Edward Dinsay, 32, at 10:45 p.m. When Canonce told Dinsay that he still had no money, the suspect lunged at him with a fan knife at 10:45 p.m. Dinsay, also of Barangay Bangkal, surrendered to the police shortly after the incident.

Margaux Ortiz

Doc loses P.14M

DR. GASPAR Montes on Tuesday attended a Christmas party in Manila. When he got home that night, he learned he was P140,000 poorer after thieves broke into his Mitsubishi Pajero and took a bag containing cash. Montes, 43, said he also lost a post dated check worth P500,000. P03 Arnaldo Tolentino said Montes had asked his driver, Honorato Mallorca, to drop off some gifts in Sta. Cruz, Manila. When Mallorca returned to the doctor's red Pajero at the corner of Masangkay and Bambang Streets at around 7 p.m., he noticed that someone had broken into the vehicle and had stolen the bag. *Leila Salaverria*

Locals beef up security in Mandaluyong

THE POLICE in Mandaluyong expect the city's malls and commercial centers to be safer places to shop in the remainder of the Christmas season as 119 barangay tanods (volunteer watchmen) help in the task of securing shoppers.

Mandaluyong is home to Starmall, Shangri-La and SM Megamall, three of the biggest malls in Metro Manila.

Sr. Supt. Ericson Velasquez, city police chief, said the tanods graduated last week from a basic law enforcement and human relations training conducted to prepare them for the task.

"They will help the police patrol the beats," he said, but added that the tanods, who are deputized to go after petty criminals and effect arrests, would not be armed with guns.

They shall carry night sticks, Velasquez said.

The city has around 300 policemen, half of whom are on duty at any given time. *Luige del Puerto*

Yes we're jueteng-free, Camanava cops claim

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

BARELY a week after President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered an intensified police drive against the illegal numbers game jueteng, police officials are saying Metro Manila is now "jueteng-free."

But National Capital Region Police Office Director Ricardo De Leon told the INQUIRER yesterday the declaration was still subject to validation.

The four police chiefs at the Northern Police District have declared their respective areas as "jueteng-free." Attached to their written reports submitted to the NPD headquarters yesterday were certifications issued by parish priests in their areas.

Earlier, the national police sought the cooperation of the Church in the drive against jueteng. Under the directive, an area can be declared jueteng-free only with the certification of the area's parish priest.

The NPD has arrested 57 suspects in illegal gambling, mostly jueteng bet collectors, from December 15 to 21.

District Director Marcelino Franco told the INQUIRER yesterday that several jueteng operators also folded up as soon as the anti-jueteng drive was launched.

A police official, however, admitted that totally stopping jueteng operations would be difficult since illegal operators were mobile and could easily transfer to areas where anti-jueteng operations were not aggressive.

Upon orders of Ms Macapagal, the PNP directed the regional police commands in the country on Dec. 15 to clamp down on the illegal numbers game.

The national police has also declared a "one strike" policy, wherein the police officer responsible for an area which other police units would find having illegal gambling operations, would be relieved immediately.

A police chief, however, saw the policy as too harsh.

In jail for the holidays

EDWIN San Diego would be spending the holidays in jail after Manila prosecutor Roberto Liwanag recommended no bail for his release.

San Diego on Tuesday night was charged before the Manila prosecutor's office for the robbery and killing of Wen Hua Yang in Malate, Manila.

Three witnesses, including Wen's companion Shan Chi Chang, identified San Diego as one of three men who pulled off a jeepney robbery on Dec. 18.

Shan told Senior Insp. Alejandro Yanquiling Jr., Western Police District homicide section chief, that it was San Diego who threatened him with a knife and took his valuables.

Two other men, Mark Guiller Samson and a certain Jojo, were reportedly the ones who shot and killed Wen when he tried to jump off the jeepney during the robbery, police said. *Leila Salaverria*

KIDS' TREAT

Presidential daughter Luli Arroyo and beauty expert Ricky Reyes take time out to treat orphans to rides at the Boom na Boom Carnival at the Cultural Center of the Philippines complex in Pasay City recently. The activity is part of Reyes' "Share-A-Toy" program, an annual outreach event for poor kids.

Ma's Xmas wish for her sick son

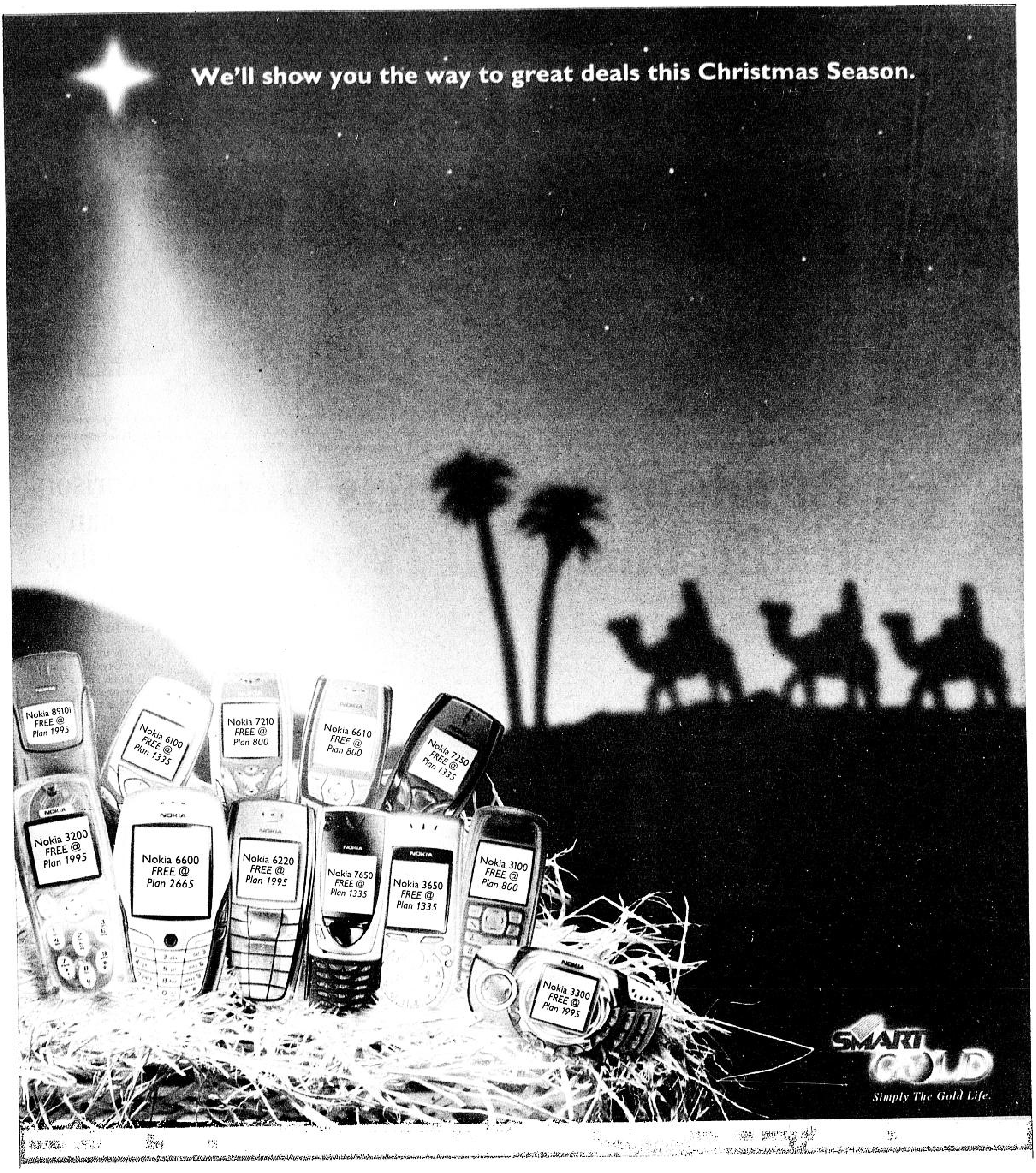
THIS Christmas, a mother makes a wish only strangers can grant.

Magdalena Reyes' eldest son, Ed Ryan, is afflicted with chronic renal failure to chronic glomemlonephritis. His doctors say Ed Ryan should undergo dialysis once a week to survive.

Now, Magdalena is worried because aside from the money needed for the weekly dialysis, her son's hospitalization bills have reached P50,300.

Her only wish now is that they can produce the amount needed to pay for Ed Ryan's hospitalization and for the weekly dialysis.

Good-hearted individuals who would like to help Magdalena can get in touch with Julito Reyes at 0918-5684224. Donations can also be sent to his account no. 2391-0726-74 at the Land Bank of the Philippines, Binangonan Branch. *Jocelyn Uy*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SPORTS

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BUSTAMANTE takes over from Bata Reyes as world pro billiards' No. 1 earner.

Django tops money list

FILIPINO Francisco "Django" Bustamante emerged the richest player in the world billiards pro tour this year with total earnings of $97,725 (P5.4 million).

The 40-year-old from Tarlac competed in 16 events worldwide and dislodged from the top moneymaking list countryman and bosom buddy Efren "Bata" Reyes, the tour's top earner in 2001 and 2002.

Bustamante, formerly based in Biel, Germany, topped the Joss Northeast 9-ball Tour stop No. 17 and 18 and the $50,000 winner-take-all 9-ball International Challenge of Champions held in August in Uncasville, Connecticut.

In addition, Bustamante placed no lower than fifth in eight events, including the World Pool Championships in Wales, proving that his selection as 2002 International Player of the Year was no fluke.

The 49-year-old Reyes, wound up only fourth this time with earnings of $69,050 (P3.8M), despite victories in the Mid-Atlantic 9-Ball Championship, the San Miguel Beer Asian 9-ball Tour Manila leg and the Las Vegas 9-ball Open.

Fil-Canadian Alex "The Lion" Pagulayan, the world pool championship runner-up who collected $76,513, landed in second place, followed by reigning World Pool king Thorsten Hohmann of Germany, who had $73,000.

US-based Filipino Jose "Amang" Parica placed fifth with $63,445, his campaign highlighted by three titles.

Rounding up the top 10 are five-time player of the year Johnny Archer ($55,960); Jeremy Jones ($52,885); Tony Drago ($37,500); Charlie Williams ($37,269); and Rodney Morris (34,625).

For Bustamante and Reyes, both supported by Puyat Sports, the money was small consolation for their failure to win a gold medal in the recent 22nd Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam.

Instead, Bustamante crashed out of the quarterfinals and Reyes settled for the bronze. *With a report from Marlon Bernardino*

RP fighter earns right to battle for crown

By Rey Danseco
Contributor

TWO months after being stripped of his title for failure to defend it, former World Boxing Council (WBC) International bantamweight champ Roger Galicia is poised to go for a more prestigious belt in his United States debut next month.

The Venezuela-based World Boxing Association has designated Galicia to fight in a superflyweight eliminator on Jan. 23 at the Kansas City Expo Center.

He faces the once-beaten Martin "El Gallo" Castillo of Mexico.

The winner will fight reigning WBA 115-lb champ Alexander "Explosivo" Muñoz of Venezuela.

The light-footed Galicia, 22, got the break on his merit as the second highest rated superfly in the world's oldest-existing boxing body.

Galicia, a 5-foot-8 southpaw who left the Mandaluyong Stable to link up with American Mike Phillips in the US last September, once held the RP superfly title.

He improved his record to 23 wins, with eight knockouts, against two losses and a draw following his fifth round stoppage of former RP bantamweight champ Johnny Lear in their clash for the vacant WBC International bantamweight crown last March 15. The bout was in the undercard of Manny Pacquiao's non-title tiff against Kazakh Serikhzan Yeshmangbetov at the Rizal Park.

Castillo, 26, four inches shorter than Galicia, once vied for the IBF superflyweight crown of Felix Machado of Venezuela. He has a 24-1 win-loss record with 15 knockouts.

KL wants SEAG, Asiad merged

KUALA LUMPUR—Top Malaysian sports officials said organizing the Southeast Asian Games every two years had become too difficult and expensive, and that they should merge with the larger Asian Games in years when both events are scheduled.

The Malaysian plan—still only in its initial stages—could see the SEA Games held as a stand-alone event every four years, and be absorbed into the Asian Games in the interim years.

Officials from the Olympic Council of Malaysia and the government's National Sports Council said they would raise the plan, which includes cutting the number of events by a third, at the SEA Games Federation meeting in the Philippines next year. The Philippines is scheduled to host the games in 2005.

Pursuing it would depend on reactions from Southeast Asian countries as well as the Asian Games organizers, said OCM President Tunku Imran Tuanku Ja'afar.

"There are too many sports contested and if we want to make the proposal interesting, I believe we should restrict the joint games to just 10 sports," Tunku Imran said.

The plan comes after years of criticism that there are too many sports in the 11-nation SEAG and that host countries—which get to choose the sports—manipulate the schedule to increase their medal chances.

At this year's games, the introduction of shuttlecocks—a kicking form of badminton—fin swimming and dragon boat racing helped host Vietnam take 158 of the 444 gold medals across 32 sports. AP

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RP bets settle for 5 silvers in Para Games

HANOI, Vietnam—The Philippines produced five silver and five bronze medals after the first day of the 2nd Para Games in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Blind sprinter Ritchel Villasis won the country's first silver medal in the women's 100-meter dash for T12 class, registering a time of 15.77 seconds. Dyg an Nurhaiyyu Md Yusof of Brunei took the gold while Siew Peng lai of Malaysia salvaged the bronze.

Maria Africita Salazar bagged another silver in the women's 100-m dash for T53 class with a time of 24.50 seconds. Pham Thi Thu Thanh won the gold medal while Thailand's Sudarat Sagsagate took the bronze.

Swimmers Dionabelle Tamara and Emily Viliaver also pocketed the silver medals in their respective events. Tamara clocked 1:47.55 to place second in the women's 50-m freestyle S7 while Villaver finished second behind a Thai in the women's 50-m freestyle S10 class.

Josephine Medina and Clarita Isidro also took the silver in the women's team competition in table tennis, bowing to host Vietnam, 4-5, in a closely fought match that was only decided in the final reverse singles.

The five bronze medals came courtesy of powerlifters Agustin Kitan and Achelle Guion, tracksters Roselin Ocampo and swimmers Purification Elks Mingarine and Resty Tagorda.

Thailand pulled away in the overall standings by harvesting 20 golds 11 silvers and 8 bronzes followed by Malaysia 11-7-10). Host Vietnam is in third position (7-9-15). The Philippines is currently in seventh place overall.

PSC Commissioner Mike Barredo, who is the head of the RP differently-abled delegation, said that he is quite satisfied with the Filipino para-athletes' performance as most of them are new and only trained for four months for the biennial event.

Barredo said that he hopes to train more athletes for the third edition of the Para Games, which the country will host in 2005 right after the Manila SEA Games.

Negrido, Camitoc lead Alabang Invt'l Jungolf winners

NONOY Negrido and Mike Camitoc fired similar one-under-par 71s in ruling their respective divisions, even as streaking AR Ramos scored another thrilling victory in the recent Alabang Invitational jungolf championships at the Alabang Country Club.

The burly Negrido, star of DHL-Mizuno's victory in the recent Fil-Am championships, notched his second straight win after the Nike Christmas Classic at Riviera, beating Justin Tambunting by three shots for the boys' 15-17 years plum.

Camitoc avenged his Nike loss to Miko Yee with a one-shot win.

Ramos surprised the big names again in Class E, nipping JR Gonzales and Migo Yee by one with his 79.

Wolen Juan Superal (80) beat Moshe Baldo in boys' Class C.

Miguel Tabuena also pulled off a vengeful 12-shot triumph in boys' Class D as archfoe Bino dela Paz could only place fourth.

The girls division winners were *balikbayan* Cristina Corpuz, Debbie de Villa, Mia Piccio, Ma-an Legaspi and Andie Unson.

Corpuz carded a 74 to beat the fancied Jayvie Agojo by one for the Class A plum, De Villa's 90 made her the runaway Class B winner, Piccio (81) turned back Crystal Superal by five, Legaspi edged Katya dela Cruz by one with a 94 and Unson (85) won over Dana Gonzales (102).

Vives shines in Fearless II Martial Arts

HARD-FIGHTING American Eben Kaneshiro (below) gets up from this pin to beat Daniel Lima of Brazil.

IT WAS certainly a night of "bad blood" for its competitors.

The Fearless II Mixed Martial Arts Championships held recently at the Philippine Sports Arena proved that it was the venue for local fighters to test their mettle in mixed martial arts.

Starting with 20 of the most fearless and toughest men in mixed martial arts in the country today, 10 emerged victorious while the losing half had to walk away from the arena with a vow to return and vindicate themselves in the next competition.

Myles Vives of New Breed Academy and Eben Kaneshiro of the US were the night's biggest winners.

In the most awaited moment of the evening, Vives figured in a no-holds-barred match with Erwin Tagle of Submission Sport. Both fighters pulled out every move in their bag of submission and grappling technique tricks.

But in the end, it was Vives who emerged victorious via a straight arm bar in the second round.

The match between foreign mixed martial artists Kaneshiro and Daniel Lima of Brazil was also a crowd-pleasing event.

Kaneshiro, from the New Breed Academy, slugged and grappled his way through Lima's defense. Although he gave a good fight, Lima, a member of Fight Club Jiu-Jitsu, later gave in to Kaneshiro's relentless drive.

Fearless II Mixed Martial Arts Championships-Bad Blood was presented in partnership with San Miguel Strong Ice, Discovery Spa, Delos Santos Hospital, pinoymma.com, Health and Beyond, Pepsi X Energy Cola, and Haagen Daz.

SPORTSWATCH

9 nations vying in Samsung int'l meet

AT LEAST nine countries will vie in the 7th staging of the Samsung Philippine International Junior Golf Championship slated Jan. 6-7, 2004 at the East course of the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club in Mandaluyong City. Fifty-two foreign junior players have already confirmed their participation in the annual event, with Hong Kong and Taiwan fielding in 10 players each. Thailand and Singapore have so far entered seven players, and Malaysia is sending at least six players including two from Sarawak. South Korea is yet to finalize a sizable group while Australia and the United States are represented by a topnotch junior player each. Philippine participation will be composed of players from Metro Manila and regional qualifiers who will be flown to Manila and back courtesy of Cebu Pacific, the official airline of the event since its first staging in 1998. Interested players may call tournament chair Gerard Cantada at 0917-8332353. Other sponsors and supporters are Pagcor, Toyota Otis, Morelia Tours, Cowhead Milk, Philippine Flour Mill, Triplex Tents, Holiday Inn Galleria Suites, noted horseowner Herminio Esguerra, sportsmen Takenobu Taira and Guilberto Duavit.

4th Ilusorio Cup up Monday at BCC

AS the temperature dips to 10 degrees in the City of Pines, a strong field is hot and raring to do battle in the 4th Nanoy Ilusorio Golf Cup this Monday. Site of the one-day event is the rolling, tricky but short par 61 Baguio Country Club golf course, one of the oldest clubs in the country. The tournament is in honor of the late Potenciano "Nanoy" Ilusorio, BCC president emeritus and chair for life," said lawyer Federico Agcaoili, president of BCC.

Non-master chess tilt all set

THE MCC Non-master chess tournament starts at 9 a.m. this Monday at the 4/F of J&F Divino Building at 967 Aurora Blvd. near LRT 2 Anonas Station in Quirino District, Quezon City. Open to all chess players unrated and rated—regardless of age and sex, the two-day event will use the seven-round Swiss System and time control of 60 minutes per player. Up for grabs is a total pot of P15,000, with the champion getting the top prize of P5,000. For inquiries, call MCC at 826-8560; 0916-1069 and 434-7542.

BEST ANGLERS: Philippine Game Fishing Foundation president Ernesto "Judes" Echauz (left) with the year's top anglers during the foundation's recent awards rites. To Echauz's left is heavy tackle Angler of the Year Rey Buencamino, overall Angler of the Year (AOY) Bong Nery, PGFF Hall of Fame awardee Bert Lingayo, overall AOY and light tackle runner-up Bobby Garcia, light tackle AOY Edmund Lim and light tackle second runner-up Antonio Ng Jr.

SEAG heroes receive cash incentives

GOVERNMENT fulfilled its promise to the heroes of the recent Vietnam 22nd Southeast Asian Games campaign by releasing cash incentives totaling close to P13 million two days before Christmas.

In behalf of President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain led the distribution of the cash bonuses to the SEAG medalists during the PSC Christmas Party Tuesday.

Wushu's Willy Wang, for winning two gold medals and one silver in the SEAG staged early this month in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh, went home with the biggest cash incentive of P250,000.

Another wushu bet, Arvin Ting, and wrestling's Marcus Valda, who each bagged two gold medals, were rewarded P200,000 each, while Mark Paragua, who figured in two gold medal-winning performances by the chess team on top of an individual gold, got P180,000.

"Definitely, it is a very bright and merry Christmas for our athletes," said Buhain. "Our gratitude to the President and the First Gentleman, (who made sure) the medalists in the SEA Games got their cash bonuses in time for Christmas."

The First Couple had promised the athletes during last Friday's courtesy call and victory party in Malacañang that the cash incentives would soon be distributed.

The Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., through chair Efraim Genuino, released the incentives, which totaled P19.9 million.

An individual gold winner in the SEAG gets a P100,000 bonus, a silver P50,000 and a bronze medalist P10,000. In the team competition (five or more members), it is P200,000 for a gold, P100,000 for a silver and P20,000 for a bronze.

The coaches of the medalists also were given cash incentives totaling some P4.3 million.

The Philippines finished fourth overall in Vietnam, which grabbed about a third of the gold medals at stake to emerge overall champion with a gold-silver-bronze output of 158-97-91. Thailand was second with 90-93-98 and Indonesia third with 55-68-98. Malaysia fell from first in 2001 to fifth this time with 44-42-59.

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Happy birthday, Boss Tsip

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

IF you can't give love today, fine. I will respect that. I will even offer my life to protect your stand.

Choosing, like shooting basketball on a bright summer day, is an uninvented luxury. Patently latent. If they say gold has a price and jade is priceless, let me say that choices, like diamonds, are forever. No man, not even a government, can ever kill a birthright—as in Jaworski having a lifetime grip of the nation's basketball throne.

Jesus of Nazareth, born some 2,500 years or so ago today, is a paragon of that truism—and more.

Happy birthday, Boss Tsip.

Jesus was born minus a midwife, minus the comforts of home, minus a hospital bed. He was born in a manger; a heap of dried stalks, dayami if you wish, was both his pillow and cushion. Aside from his mother, Mary, the only human being present at childbirth was Joseph, the world's first non-biological father a.k.a. Jesus' erpat. Oh, yes, there were other witnesses, among them, sheep and *mga anak ng tupa*.

Happy birthday, Boss Tsip.

It is obvious Jesus was of the poorest of origins: He was born poor, he was born without power. Yet, he'd grow up to become Lord, not of the Rings, but of all Kings who ever roamed the Earth. Include too those Kings continuing to roam this planet, not to mention the drug lords and *jueteng* lords and those from the House of Lords.

For 30 years, Jesus of Nazareth lived in virtual obscurity. Because Joseph was a carpenter, Jesus, if his name was ever mentioned at all during gatherings, was always referred to as "the carpenter's son."

Early on, I had wished that tag attached to my name, but my father wasn't a carpenter; he was a capataz and, later, a foreman of the Department of Public Works and Highways. He built wooden bridges and roads.

I do carpentry now but only occasionally, which makes me sad at times. Writing isn't just a lonely job, it also robs you of many wonders, like building chairs and tables. The last time I finished crafting my kitchen stool was in 1995—the second since 1981. The last time I built a table was in 1996; happily for me, it still sits in one corner at the sala of painter Danny Dalena. But that's another story.

Jesus of Nazareth built more than stools, chairs and tables. He built a temple in our hearts. No man, not even a government, can ever topple that.

Happy birthday, Boss Tsip.

It was in the last three years of his life that Jesus of Nazareth became known as someone different from the rest of us. He created miracles, like making the blind see, the cripple walk, the sick cured, like in the case of lepers, producing bread and fish for hundreds to eat. Add to that his act of raising some people, like Lazarus, from the dead.

For that, he angered the high priests, rulers and kings of his time.

He had no kingdom and yet, the powers-that-be feared him.

He had nothing, neither armies with AK-47s or M-16s slung in their shoulders nor WMDs, and yet, those in power wanted him dead.

He was a gunless revolutionary leading a band of 12 unarmed disciples who mostly came from poor folk like him. Not even one carried a toothpick for a weapon. And yet, they had him arrested. Next, they tortured him. His crime: He told Pontius Pilate, the presiding judge during his trial for rebellion: "I never said I was a King. But if you say so, my kingdom is not on planet Earth."

Before Pilate's kangaroo court was constituted, one of Jesus' disciples, Judas Iscariot, betrayed the carpenter's son from Nazareth. The rest deserted him. Peter, another disciple, even denied knowing Jesus when asked by a bystander if he knew Jesus.

During the trial, the crowd, infiltrated by agitators and saboteurs like Edsa 3, cried, "Crucify him!"

Pilate relented. Centurions would soon put a crown of thorns on Jesus' head to mock his kingdom. They stripped to the waist the only robe he ever wore the last three years. He died on the cross he had been ordered to carry to Mt. Calvary, his hands and feet nailed to it, naked from waist up. He was sandwiched by two hardcore criminals who, like him, were also nailed to a cross. It was a most barbaric deed and yet, before he breathed his last, Jesus asked his father: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing."

If you cannot love him, how can you love your mother?

I know it's not easy giving love. But to a person professing to be at peace with the world, giving love should be as natural as breathing. One not capable of giving love, especially in this day of days, can only love the art of hating. Yes, it can be argued, again, that it's a choice as respected as Jesus' choice to forgive his killers. But if one can honestly say a temple built by Jesus resides in one's heart permanently, the death of the "carpenter's son" from Nazareth would not have gone to waste.

Happy birthday, Boss Tsip.

***

FASTBREAK. Ed Gaddi and Pompey Nolasco of the Ateneo Law Alumni Golf Assocation (Alaga) did a remarkable job of suggesting that a giant JVC TV set from Alaga's Pong Salud of JVC Philippines be donated to Golden Acres, the home for the aged located in Pagasa, Quezon City. The turnover rites will be held during the Alaga tournament on Jan. 26 to be hosted by The Country Club members headed by former Ateneo Law School Dean Dindo de los Angeles, Chito Buenaventura, Perry Pe, Louie Sison and Randy Sioson. To the Golden Acres, please call 8262103 or 8264205 and ask for Ed Gaddi, who replaced the late and highly respected CA Justice Louie Javellana as Alaga executive director. I'm sure the tenants of Golden Acres, a place I will cherish since I used to live a stone's throw away from there for years; will treasure the gift. May Alaga's tribe increase.

Sprewell makes fiery return to NY

KOBE Bryant goes acrobatic in this layup off Erick Dampier of Golden State. AFP

NEW YORK—Latrell Sprewell scored 31 points during his emotional return to Madison Square Garden, leading the Minnesota Timberwolves to a 98-92 win over the New York Knicks in NBA play on Tuesday.

Sprewell, who was traded by the Knicks to the Timberwolves last summer, yelled at and taunted the New York bench and even swore at Knicks chair James Dolan in the fourth quarter.

He also turned in a dominant performance to spoil New York team president Isiah Thomas's first game at the helm.

Sam Cassell also scored 31 points for Minnesota, while Kevin Garnett added 22 points and 13 rebounds.

Allan Houston led New York with 26 points while Keith Van Horn—who was dealt for Sprewell—scored 20, but just two in the final quarter.

In Cleveland, LeBron James scored 22 points as the Cavaliers won their third straight game, 97-86, over the New Orleans Hornets.

In Atlanta, Shareef Abdur-Rahim scored 25 points to lead the Hawks past the Boston Celtics 93-88.

In Miami, Dwyane Wade scored 20 points—11 in the fourth quarter—to lead the Heat over the Washington Wizards 79-72.

In East Rutherford, Richard Jefferson scored 26 points to lead the New Jersey Nets to their sixth straight home win, 95-78 over the Chicago Bulls.

Jason Kidd had 18 points for the Nets, winners of seven of nine overall.

In Oakland, Clifford Robinson scored 24 points to lead the Golden State Warriors past the Los Angeles Lakers 107-98.

Kobe Bryant topped Los Angeles with 23 points, while Shaquille O'Neal added 21 points.

In San Antonio, Tim Duncan scored 22 points as the Spurs cruised to their 11th straight win, 111-90 over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Tony Parker added 19 points and a career-high 14 assists for the Spurs, who shot a season-high 55 percent from the floor.

In Sacramento, Peja Stojakovic poured in 41 points to lead the Kings to a 114-97 win over the Memphis Grizzlies. *Reuters*

Other results: Bucks 83, Pistons 78; Pacers 79, Rockets 71; Trail Blazers 97, Mavs 88; SuperSonics 116, Suns 90; Kings 114, Grizzlies 97.

China serious on Olympic cleanup

BEIJING—China's capital wants to clean up its act before the 2008 Summer Olympics, finding better ways to dispose of its millions of tons of garbage, officials said Wednesday.

"We want to host the most wonderful Games in history," Chen Wenzhan, director of the Beijing municipal administrative committee, told a briefing.

"To hold the Olympics, we not only need good stadiums but also a great environment," he said.

That is a tall order, because the city of 13 million produces a total of 4.2 million tons of garbage every year, 90 percent of which gets buried.

To realize its ambitions, the city government plans to build 15 new garbage treatment facilities capable of disposing of 12,500 tons of rubbish every day.

Environmental issues have been put on the frontburner as Beijing gets ready to host the world's biggest sports event.

A total of 3.6 billion dollars has been earmarked for investment in environmental and other transportation projects. *AFP*

Hewitt to marry Clijsters

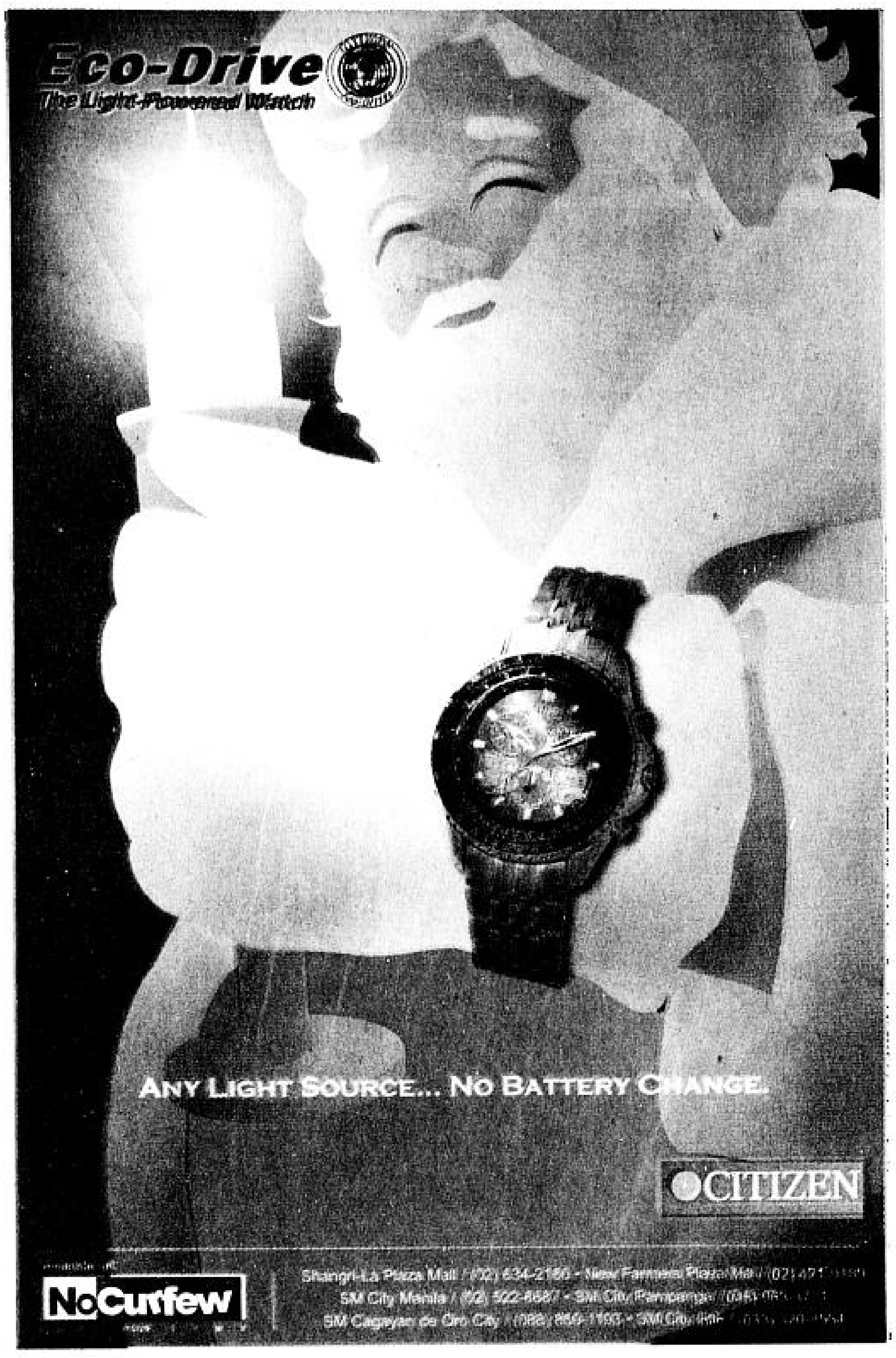
SYDNEY, Australia—Tennis players Lleyton Hewitt and Kim Clijsters are to marry following Hewitt's proposal during a cruise on Sydney Harbor.

The Australian former No.1 and the Belgian No.2 became engaged on Tuesday, according to The Daily Telegraph newspaper.

Clijsters, 20, was said to be "overjoyed". *AP*

HEWITT

CLIJSTERS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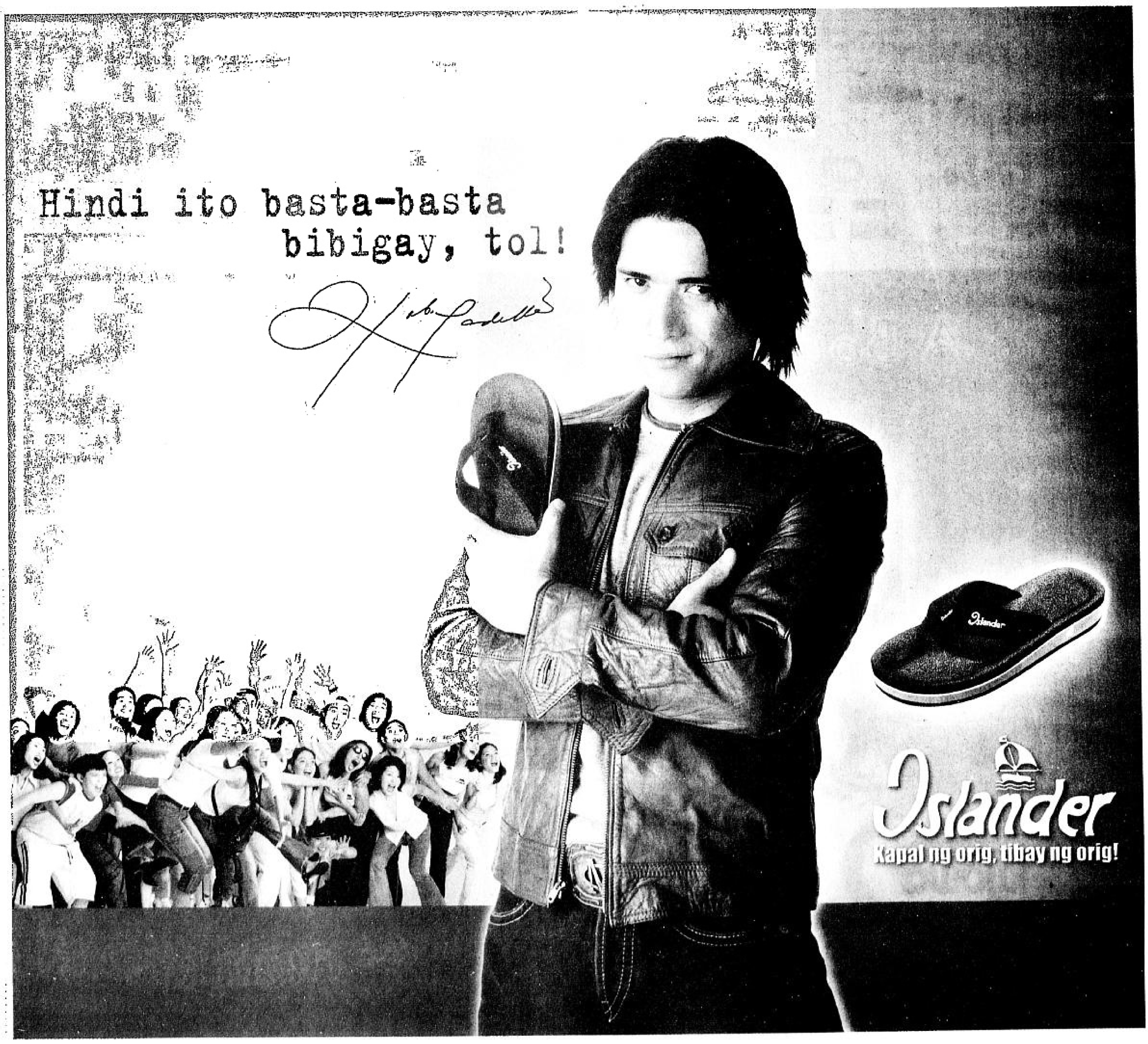

ENTERTAINMENT

E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Louie C. Camino

"HOMECOMING"

A better crop of films this year

By Nini Valera

WEDDINGS, funerals, nosebleeds, superheroes.

These are the stuff that make this year's Metro Manila Film Festival, which starts today in theaters nationwide. Most of the entries, crafted with both awards and box-office appeal in mind, are a better crop compared with last year's contenders. But what makes this year's film derby more interesting is the participation of more new directors (Erik Matti, Jeffrey Jeturian, Mac Alejandre), including a first-timer (Mark Meily), who crosses over to full-length features after over a decade of directing 30- and 60-seconder TV commercials.

Seven of the movies open today. Two others open on Jan. 1.

Homecoming, Teamwork Productions, director Gil Portes, and writers Senedy Que, Adolf Alix and Portes.

Cast: Elizabeth Oropesa, Alessandra de Rossi, Bembol Rocco.

The Overseas Filipino Worker in the time of SARS and ignorance.

Context: A small film with a big promise and a bigger heart. It will jolt movie audiences into awareness of the OFW's reality that bites, rather than the romanticized version of the OFW as new national hero.

Malimata, Canary Films and writer-director Joey Javier Reyes

Cast: Rica Peraleja, Marvin Agustin, Dingdong Dantes, Ricky Davao, Anna Capri, and Barbara Perez.

A whodunit from a psychic's perspective. Rica sees dead people who are looking for justice.

Context: There's something strange in the neighborhood, and it's not the cop that the people call.

Crying Ladies, Unitel Productions Inc. and writer-director Mark Meily.

Cast: Sharon Cuneta, Hilda Koronel, Angel Aquino, Eric Quizon.

The vanishing trade of professional mourners in Chinese funerals is the backdrop of the coming to terms with life of three down-and-out women who cry for pay.

Context: Redemption is at the end of the road for those who seek it even if perdition appears at every wrong turn.

Filipinas, Viva Films, director Joel Lamangan, writer Roy Iglesias.

Cast: Maricel Soriano, Richard Gomez, Dawn Zulueta, Aiko Melendez, Armida Siguion-Reyna, Victor Neri, Wendell Ramos.

The struggle of the Philippines into nationhood as a metaphor personified by a typical Filipino family with the unlikely surname Filipinas.

With all the siblings present in the Filipinas ancestral home in Bulacan, brothers come to blows because of their contradicting ideals. Sisters reveal festering hurts against each other. The conflicts end abruptly when matriarch Armida, who intervenes in a fist fight between Richard and Victor, falls, hits her head on the floor, and drifts into a coma.

Context: The Philippines is in a coma, but the sense of nationhood is kept alive by the people's tenacity to struggle despite the odds.

Mano Po 2, Regal Films, director Erik Matti, and writer Roy Iglesias.

Cast: Susan Roces, Christopher de Leon, Kris Aquino, Zsa Zsa Padilla, Lorna Tolentino, and

A BETTER/A23

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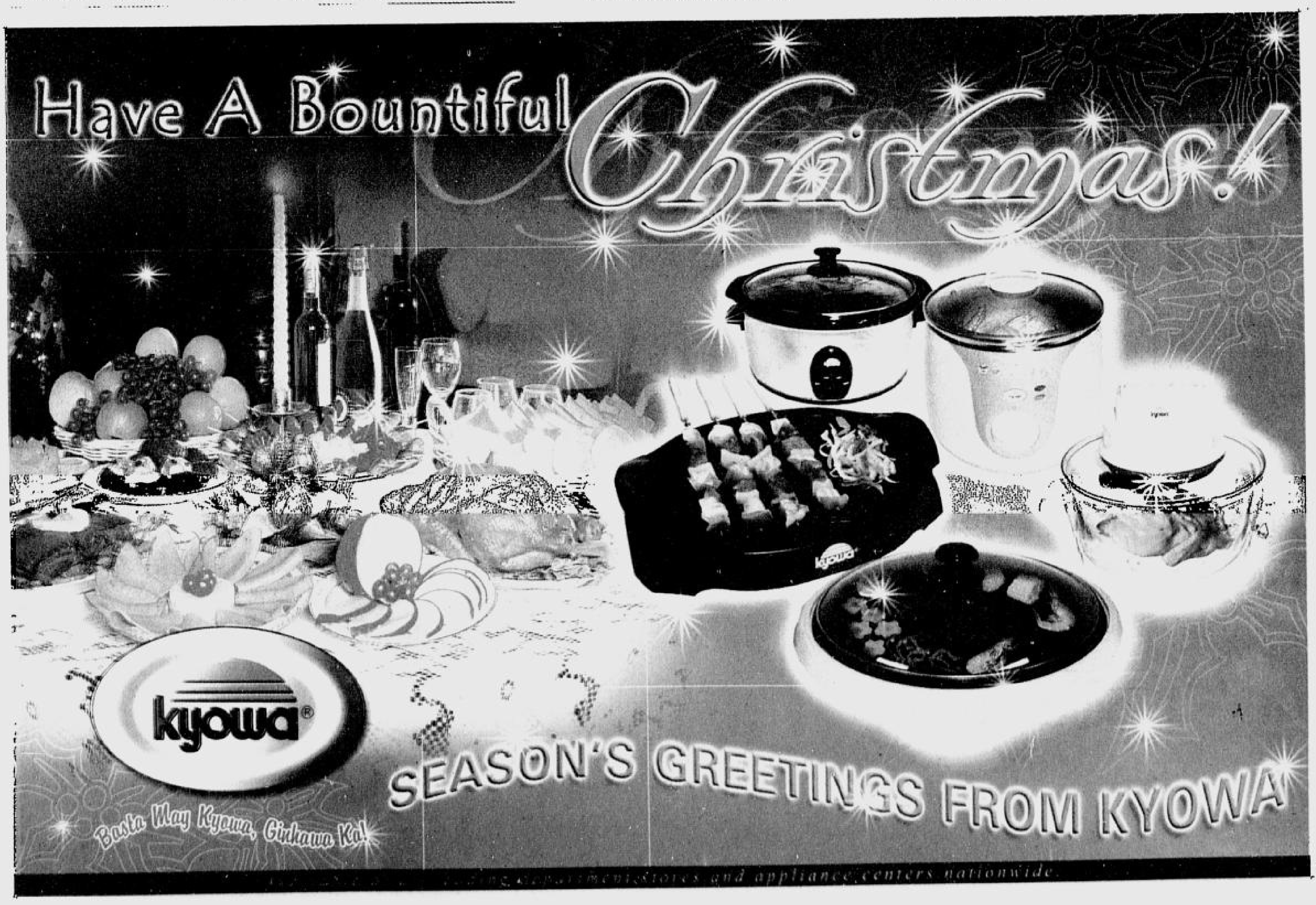
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6 hot 'Fever' nights at Camp John Hay

SHOW TIME

CAMP John Hay presents "Forest Fever," six days of fun and music leading to a spectacular New year's Eve party at the all-brand-new Camp John Hay Trade and Cultural Center in Baguio City, the venue of the recent Advertising Congress.

Each night features a different club theme top-billed by prominent deejays from Manila's hottest bars—Nolet Santos of Tres Amigos, Martin Pulgar of Temple Bar in Greenbelt 3 and Reggie Innocencio of Where Else.

"Forest Fever" starts with hip hop and rave on Dec. 26 and 27, chill on Dec. 28, retro on Dec. 29 and Latin on Dec. 30.

The event culminates with the 2nd New Year's Eve spectacular on Dec. 31.

For Baguio residents, this will be the first time to experience Manila's ultimate club scene.

Also in the party are Wendell Garcia of V Bar and Il Ponticello, Spinning Deep House, Lounge Old School and Tribal or Whatever.

Never mind that the temperature at Camp John Hay will be about 10 degrees Celsius, "Forest Fever" promises to be hot. The fever begins nightly at 9 p.m. and goes all the way till 3 a.m.

Culinary artist Billy King is crafting a 17-meter long central bar with its own lighting system in the Camp John Hay Trade and Cultural Center. He will also set up food stations around the convention center.

"Forest Fever" club nights will lead to the second New Year's Eve Spectacular on Dec. 31, also at the Camp John Hay Trade and Cultural Center. This event features the music of classic rock band Wally Gonzales and Friends alternating with hot Latin band Guarana.

A free flowing champagne from 11:30 p.m to midnight is also offered.

Tickets to "Forest Fever" are P250 each, while tickets to the New Year's Eve Spectacular are P1,500 each. Call Camp John Hay Manor at its Manila hotline, 845-0911, or in Baguio, (074) 446-0231.

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The ultimate Peninsula Christmas wishlist

IN CELEBRATION of its 27th Christmas, David Batchelor, general manager of The Peninsula Manila, hit upon the capital idea of hosting a silent auction for all the contents of the first-ever ultimate Peninsula Christmas wishlist, the proceeds of which would benefit the beneficiaries of Make-A-Wish Foundation.

"Everyone knows that actions speak louder than words," Batchelor says.

"The holiday season is traditionally a time for giving, and this Christmas, we decided to involve the many friends we have worked closely with the past year. We requested them to donate gifts for a hamper which we would put up for silent bidding, stressing that their philanthropic gesture would make a difference for countless others who have so much less."

And the response has been overwhelming. What had earlier been envisioned as the "ultimate hamper" metamorphosed into the Ultimate Peninsula Christmas Wishlist.

"We'd like to think that the Ultimate Peninsula Christmas Wishlist contains everything that everyone wants for Christmas," explains Mariano B. Garchitorena, The Peninsula Manila's director of public relations. "It will be a 'goody bag' full of gifts for everyone in your list—whether they have been naughty or nice or just generally deserving. From the diva to the dealmaker to the up-and-comer."

The ultimate Peninsula Christmas wishlist has a bit of everything needed to keep everyone happy this Christmas. From two round-trip Business Class tickets to Hong Kong via Cathay Pacific Airways to a 3-night stay for two in a deluxe harbor view suite at The Peninsula Hong Kong with breakfast for two at The Lobby and round-trip airport transfer for two in a Rolls Royce limousine plus dinner for two at Felix. Or maybe you have a yen for a Kate Spade leather picture frame, stationery sets and a nylon camel checkbook-cum-wallet or an Hermes Espace ladies watch. There is a one-of-a-kind Venetian silk-emu egg-murano crystal lamp from Firma and a blue velvet 3-seater sofa from Kish. About Design's Claude Tayag is giving a hand-sculpted narra "red tape organizer" while partner Miguel Aguas donated a wrought-iron table-top Christmas tree that won best product design in the 2002 Katha Awards.

There will also be gifts from Hans Brumann Jeweler, Cartier, Jewelmer, Nina Ricci, Alfred Dunhill, Pineapple, Ferragamo, Prada, Tabac, Vie Nouvelle Jewelry, Metropolitan Museum of Art and Montblanc. Other gifts from The Peninsula Manila include a bottle of Chateau Palmer 1999, Margaux, a 50-gram tin of beluga caviar, one set His & Hers Peninsula bathrobes, a 750-gram bottle of Peninsula Champagne Deutz, a big deluxe box of Peninsula Chocolates, and a big deluxe box of Peninsula Blend Tea.

The total value of the ultimate Peninsula Christmas wishlist is P858,797.50 with the total proceeds benefiting Make-A-Wish Foundation.

However, helping out Make-A-Wish Foundation requires action. "Yours. Ours. Everyone's. They need financial assistance" reminds Batchelor.

Those who would like to join The Peninsula Manila's Christmas fund-raising endeavor may fill out a silent bid form for the ultimate Peninsula Christmas wishlist with the opening bid for the entire lot set at a minimum of P250,000.

Silent bidding had commenced on Dec. 6 and continues until 11:55 p.m. of Dec. 25, at which time The Peninsula Manila will close the bids to the highest bidder. The proceeds will be presented by Batchelor to the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Mechanics for the silent auction are available at The Peninsula Manila's public relations department or the Concierge Desk

The event partners for the ultimate Peninsula Christmas Wishlist are: Miguel Aguas and Claude Tayag for About Design, Cathay Pacific Airways, Emporium Gallery Corp, exclusive distributor of Hermes, Firma, Hans Brumann Jeweler, Jewelmer, Kish, Pineapple, Rustan's, Stores Specialists Inc, Tabac, and Vie Nouvelle Jewelry.

The sole beneficiary of the proceeds from the sale of the entire lot of the ultimate Peninsula Christmas wishlist is Make-A-Wish Foundation. Make-A-Wish Foundation is the world's largest wish-granting foundation. It grants the most fervent wishes of children between the ages of 3 to 18 afflicted with life-threatening illnesses.

Absentee bidders are welcomed for the silent auction.

> The total value of the ultimate Peninsula Christmas wishlist is P858,797.50 with the total proceeds benefiting Make-A-Wish Foundation.

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Luxurious 'holidate' respite at Mandarin Oriental

FOLLOWING a frenzy of holiday partying, a nice and quiet respite awaits local residents at Mandarin Oriental, Manila with its Christmas Gems room packages, valid until Jan. 3, 2004. The package starts at P2,990++ for a superior room inclusive of an overnight accommodation for two persons, American breakfast for two, and complimentary local calls. The same amenities are offered at P4,200++ for a Junior Suite, and P5,000++ for a Club Suite with the attendant benefits that come with Club accommodations.

As a special holiday treat, those who book a minimum of two paying nights—one room for two nights or two rooms for one night—automatically get a complimentary third room night to be used during the stay.

A New Year's Eve Ruby Package at P9,700++ offers an overnight stay at an Executive or Premier room for two persons, New Year's Eve dinner for two adults at Paseo Uno with complimentary bottle of house wine, American breakfast for two at Paseo Uno, a holiday hamper, complimentary local calls, dawn buffet breakfast for two at Paseo Uno, an Oriental Spa reliever massage for two, late check-out, and unlimited use of high-speed Internet.

For the ultimate pampering, the Diamond Package at P22,000++ includes an overnight stay at a club suite with the attendant club benefits plus similar amenities. For reservations and enquiries, call 750-8888 extension 2304, 2305, or 2802 to 2803.

New Year's eve countdown at Dusit Hotel Nikko

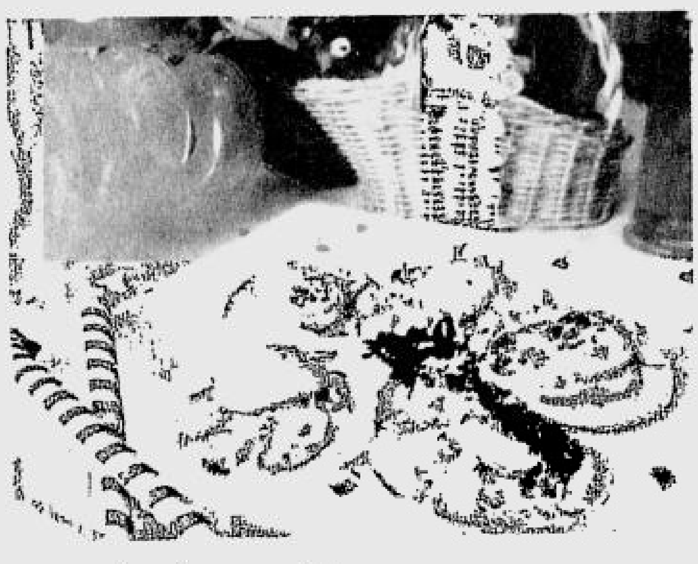
BID the year 2003 goodbye and welcome the year 2004 with a party of fantastic food, music and freshly brewed San Miguel beer at Fiesta San Miguel of Dusit Hotel Nikko on Dec. 31.

Join the Countdown for only P350++ consumable and jam with two of the country's top bands Sign of Times back-to-back with Stagecrew. New Year's Eve diners at Dusit Hotel Nikko's other outlets Thien Duong, Benjarong, Benkay and The Café get free access plus noise makers to the Fiesta San Miguel countdown.

Fiesta San Miguel will also offer Fiesta Specials for dinner on Dec. 25, 31 and Jan 1. Family style set menus are pegged at P3,000++ for four persons and P5,500++ for eight persons.

Fiesta San Miguel is the first and only place offering freshly brewed San Miguel along with an array of nouvelle Filipino dishes.

For queries and reservations, call 867-3333 extension 3308.

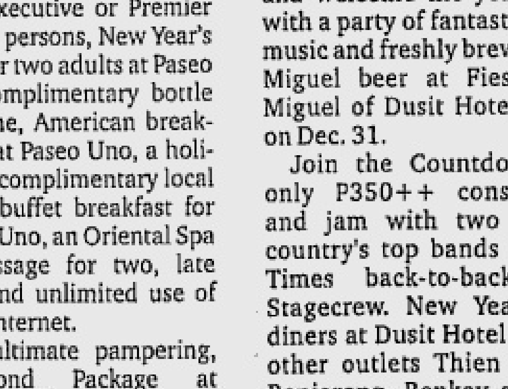


A sparkling Christmas celebration at Shangri-La's Mactan Island Resort

CHRISTMAS is just around the corner and at Shangri-La's Mactan Island Resort, everything is in place for this Yuletide celebration.

On Christmas Eve, treat your loved ones to the traditional Noche Buena dinners in the resort's outlets. At the Garden Patio, feast on a delectable spread of international dishes made even more sumptuous for the holidays. Enjoy special Christmas carvings, Yule log cake and irresistible sweets. Feast on authentic family set menus at the Shang Palace, specially prepared by executive Chinese chef Eddie Chua.

After dinner, commemorate the birth of Christ with a Christmas Eve Mass at 10 p.m. at the resort chapel.



On Christmas Day, partake of a festive Italian dinner buffet spruced up for the holiday season by Italian chef Denis Vecchiato. At the Cowrie Cove, indulge in a delightful harvest from the sea with an all-out buffet of the island's sumptuous seafood specialties.

Lastly, usher in the New Year with the grandest beach party in the island. It's a whole night of fun and frolic with spectacular fireworks and non-stop entertainment to last the whole night.

For more information and restaurant reservations, call (032) 2310 288 extension 51. For inquiries on the New Year's Eve Beach Party, call (032) 2318 261.

DID YOU KNOW...

Jerry Yan, Vanness Wu, Vic Zhuo and **Ken Zhu** of the Taiwanese pop group F4 are expected to arrive in Manila today, 11:45 a.m., on board Eva Air Flight 271 from Taipei. The Flower 4, or F4, superstars are to perform in a full-length concert tomorrow night at the Philsports Arena in Pasig. But Jerry's fans want the show canceled because those who bought tickets costing less than P3,000 can't see them in person, says Liza Eusebio of the Jerry Yan Fans Club.

Let's do our share to boost the Metro filmfest

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

THE 2003 Metro Manila Film Festival officially starts its two-week run today, and we hope that you go out of your way to patronize its "seven plus two" entries (seven open today, and two more will be shown starting Jan. 1).

Hopes are high that this edition of the annual filmfest will be a good one. The local movie industry has had a difficult year, so if the filmfest entries do well in terms of both quality and box office, it will go a long way in boosting our film people's overall showing this year, and brighten their prospects for Film Year 2004.

In the past, some local movies were rapped because they scrimped on time, budget and concepts, dished out old-hat, formula fare, and cast the usual stars in predictable roles. All this added up to the general feeling that our film people were taking their audience for granted.

This in turn prompted some viewers to patronize Hollywood blockbusters instead. Coupled with the loss of income resulting from film piracy, this further reduced local movie producers' income and forced them to cut back on production, leading to the hard times that many film workers are currently experiencing.

Well, it looks like the movie industry has learned its lesson. Many of this year's Metro filmfest entries have big budgets and star value, and a number of them have relatively fresh concepts and themes.

It behooves us members of the movie audience therefore to demonstrate our appreciation for our film people's extra effort and resolve, by making it a point to view as many festival entries as we can.

The Filipino film industry's current woes are the result of many negative factors. To solve the industry's problems, therefore, a confluence of positive steps must also be taken.

Producers' extra effort is one of them, but audience support is another key factor, without which the industry cannot climb out of the rut it's in. So, fellow members of the movie audience, let's do our share to help assure a brighter film season next year.

'Vamos a Belen'

THE RAMON Obusan Folkloric Group presents "Vamos a Belen" at the CCP's Tanghalang **Nicanor Abelardo**, with a gala on Dec. 28 at 8 p.m., and matinee on Dec. 29 at 3 p.m.

The annual Christmas presentation showcases a collection of *pastores* traditions from the Bicol region, Leyte, Samar, Pampanga, Cagayan Valley, Cebu, Bohol and Negros Oriental.

The Christmas story is retold in various enchanting ways—the *Maytinis* of Kawit, Cavite, *Panarit* of Samar, *Kagharong* of Legaspi, Albay, and *Ensayo* of Libangon, Southern Leyte.

There will also be reenactments of the *sa-ot sang mga bito-on* (dancing stars) and *banana belen* traditions of Bacong, Negros Oriental; the three horse-riding child-Kings of Mabitac, Laguna, the *niños inocentes* revelry of Ibajay, Aklan, and the unique *daigon* of Dumanjug, Cebu. Call 832-3878 or 831-0894.

'Enough'

"ENOUGH," starring **Jennifer Lopez**, will be the film on view on Cinemax at 9 p.m. on Jan. 4, 2004. The thriller casts Lopez as a heretofore defenseless woman who turns the table on her vile husband, and fights him to the finish.

In the movie's physical and psychological war of nerves and cunning, Lopez's character transforms herself into a combative mother willing to do anything to protect her young daughter.

'Beyond the Surface'

ONGOING until Jan. 8, "Beyond the Surface—Japanese Style of Making Things," presented by the Japan Foundation and the CCP in celebration of Asean-Japan Exchange Year 2003.

Curated by Prof. **Ryu Niimi** of the Musashino Art University, the exhibit features works of photography, interior design, textiles and fiber sculpture that convey messages through their surfaces.

Participating artists include **Miyako Ishiuchi, Michiko Kon, Reiko Sudo, Hideho Tanaka** and **Tokujin Yoshioka**. Call 832-3702.

MTV contest winner

CONGRATULATIONS to **Rica Arevalo**'s students at the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila for winning the first Metro pop MTV contest. The winning video is **Mike Villegas**' "Pretend That I Don't Love You," sung by **Cookie Chua**.

Twelve schools were given P15,000 each by GMA-7 to conceptualize and execute the MTVs of the Metropop entries. The judges for the MTV contest were GMA VP **Wilma Galvante**, and directors **Robert Quebral** and **Louie Ignacio**.

Quebral observed, "We all thought Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila had the best production value, better content, great execution and the biggest impact. But it was the humor that impressed us most."

Criteria for judging: technical excellence, 30; originality, 20; creativity, 20; and text votes, 20. The winner received a trophy and P50,000 cash prize.

A better crop...

From page A20

many others.

Chinese patriarch with two wives and a mistress retains his hold on tradition even after his death, but leaves behind his women and his children to solve the usual squabble over inheritance and figure out their rightful places in the food chain.

Context: Chinese culture, in its complexities, has become part of the Filipino mind-set. It is a way of life that is Chinese in nature, but which is transformed into Filipino sensibilities.

Captain Barbell, Premier Productions, director Mac Alejandre, and writer RJ Nuevas, based on the classic Mars Ravelo *komiks*superhero.

Cast: Bong Revilla, Ogie Alcasid, Regine Velasquez, Rufa Mae Quinto, Jeffrey Quizon, Albert Martinez, Snooky Serna, Sarah Geronimo.

Good vs evil, and evil never has a chance with a man in blue tights and red cape.

All sorts of menace haunt the city of man: A *taong grasa* turned into a menacing dead rat (Jeffrey Quizon), a sexy siren who turns oversexed men into ice cubes, a demonical maniac who plays with fire and spews it to create havoc and destruction. Captain Barbell, who is really Ogie transformed by a barbell into superhero, flies the skies to save humanity. Captain Barbell conquers!

Context: Dreams are free, after all.

Fantastic Man, Octo-Arts Films, director Tony Reyes and writer Chito Francisco.

Cast: Vic Sotto, Ara Mina, Michael V.

Love will conquer all, even if one partner is evil and the other a do gooder.

Context: Fantastic feats to save the world and each other when nothing else can.

Anjanette can come home now, says BI

By Martin P. Marfil

ACTRESS and former Bb. Pilipinas title holder Anjanette Abayari can now return to the Philippines, the Bureau of Immigration said last Tuesday.

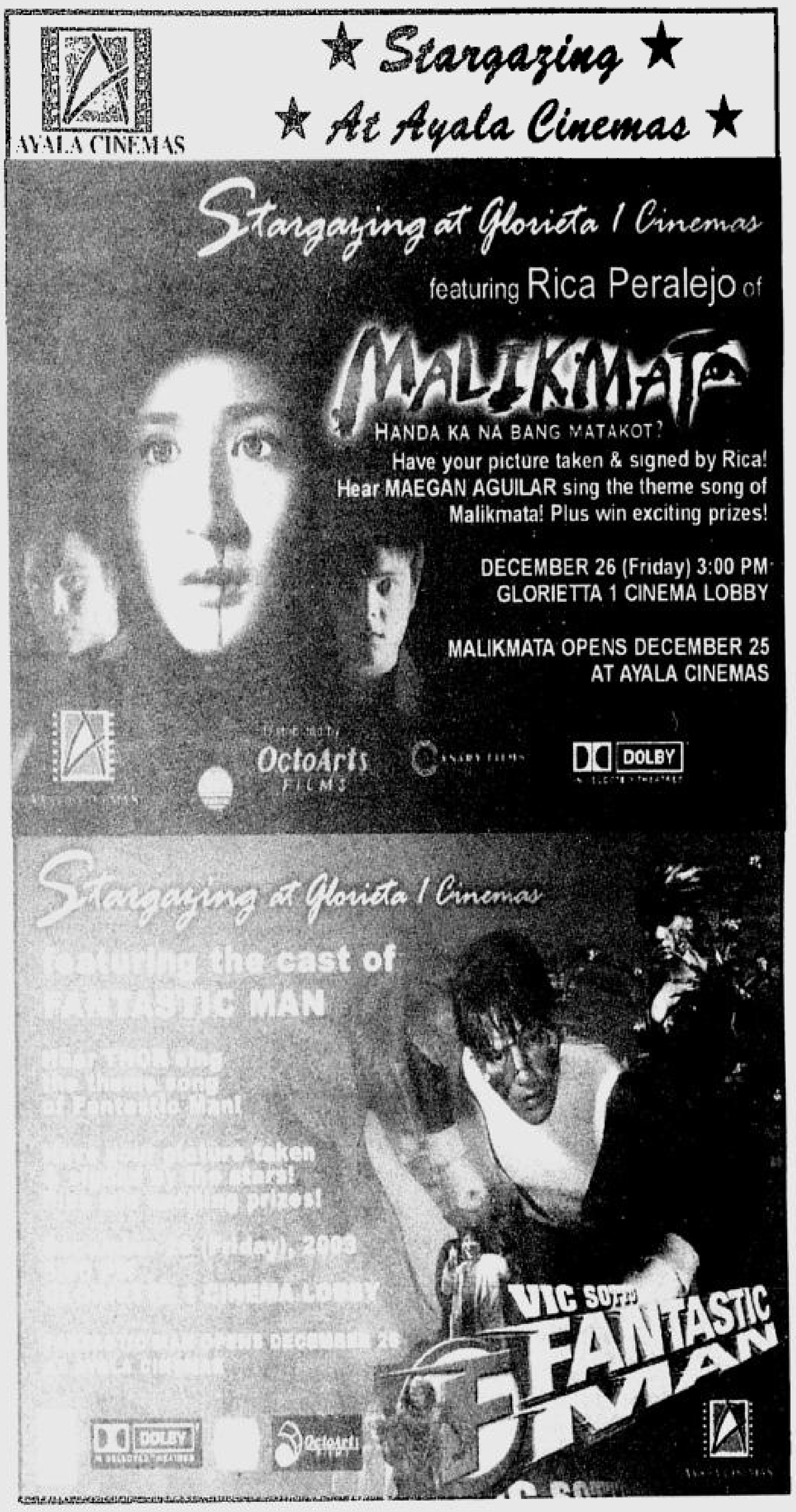
Abayari was caught in Guam for possession of methamphetamine hydrocloride in November 1999 and was placed on the immigration bureau's blacklist and banned from re-entering the country. Her lawyers told the bureau that Abayari has "learned her lesson from her bitter past" and they appealed to the agency to allow her to re-enter the country of her birth where, according to them, she plans to stay permanently.

On Tuesday, the bureau said in a press statement that it has removed Abayari from the blacklist, which means she can now avail herself of a new law allowing former Filipinos to reacquire Filipino citizenship.

It said Abayari, 33, must report to the bureau within 10 days of her return, and apply for dual citizenship within three months under Republic Act No. 9225, or the Citizenship Retention and Reacquisition Act of 2003.

The decision to allow the actress back into the country was issued after Abayari's lawyers asked that she be removed from the blacklist.

Abayari was born in Passi, Iloilo on July 20, 1970, and migrated a few years later to the US where she later became a naturalized American citizen. She returned to the Philippines in 1996, became a beauty queen and then an actress.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★ At Ayala Cinemas ★

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AT AYALA CINEMAS
OctoArts FILMS
DOLBY

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featuring the cast of
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Hear THOR sing the theme song of Fantastic Man!
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[illegible] (Friday), 2003
[illegible] CINEMA LOBBY
[illegible] OPENS DECEMBER 25
[illegible]
DOLBY
OctoArts
VIC SOTTO
FANTASTIC MAN

MARVIN AGUSTIN DINGDONG DANTES
RICKY DAVAO WOWIE DE GUZMAN ANNA CAPRI NIKKI VALDEZ and MS. BARBARA PEREZ
NOW SHOWING
at Robinsons Movieworld Cinemas
DECEMBER 25
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MALIKMATA
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JOSE JAVIER REYES, DGPI
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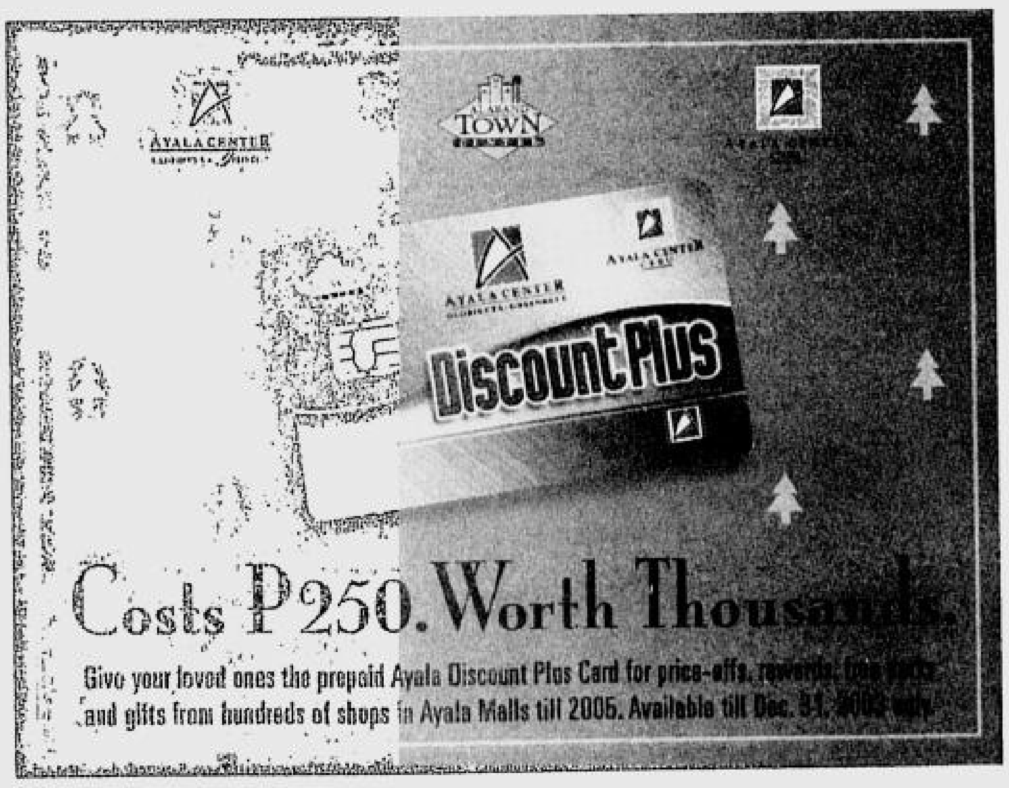
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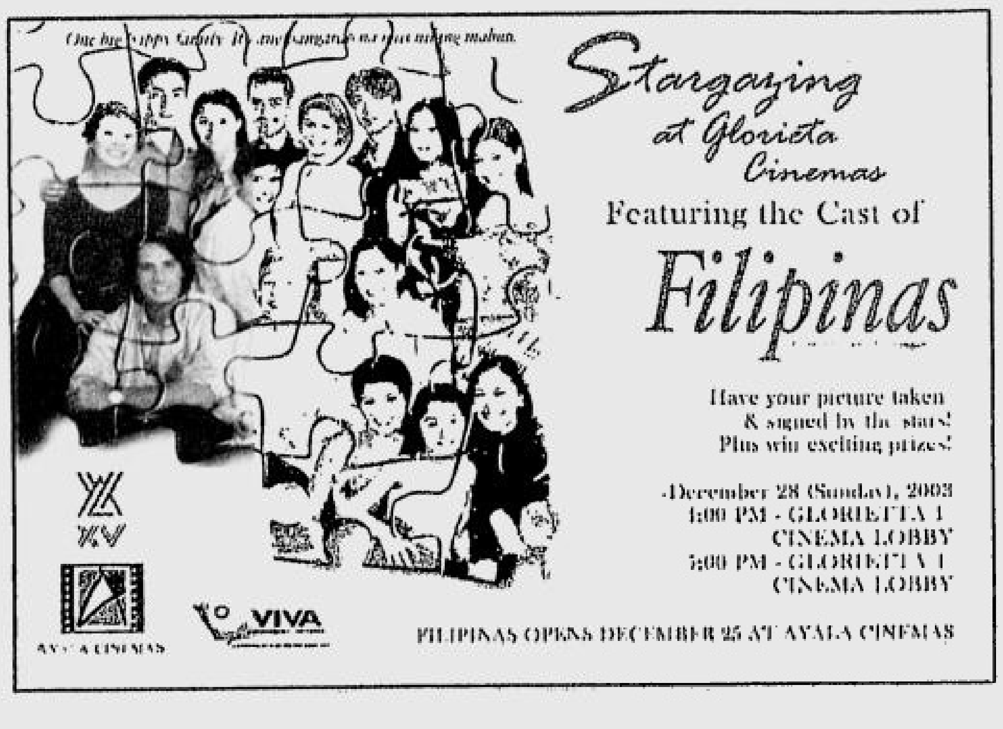
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Filipinas
Have your picture taken & signed by the stars! Plus win exciting prizes!
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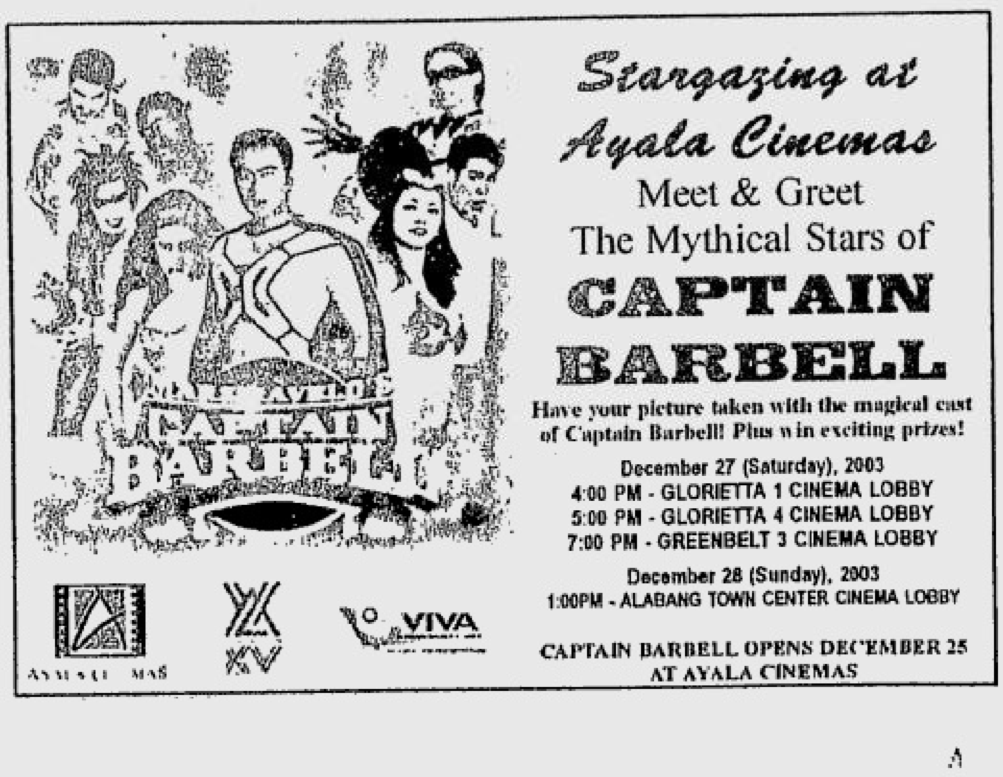
4:00 PM - GLORIETTA 1 CINEMA LOBBY
5:00 PM - GLORIETTA 4 CINEMA LOBBY
AYALA CINEMAS
VIVA
FILIPINAS OPENS DECEMBER 25 AT AYALA CINEMAS


Stargazing at Ayala Cinemas
Meet & Greet
The Mythical Stars of
CAPTAIN BARBELL
Have your picture taken with the magical cast of Captain Barbell! Plus win exciting prizes!
December 27 (Saturday), 2003
4:00 PM - GLORIETTA 1 CINEMA LOBBY
5:00 PM - GLORIETTA 4 CINEMA LOBBY
7:00 PM - GREENBELT 3 CINEMA LOBBY
December 28 (Sunday), 2003
1:00PM - ALABANG TOWN CENTER CINEMA LOBBY
VIVA
CAPTAIN BARBELL OPENS DECEMBER 25
AT AYALA CINEMAS

Christmases, happy and sad

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

SOMETIMES we have to contend with rain all year round so that we may have roses in December.

When we look back, our fondest memories seem to center on Christmastime. I rounded up some celebrities to share their most memorable Christmas moment ever.

May you all have the "Christ-musts" your heart desires and deserves.

Diether Ocampo. My most memorable Christmas was the Christmas I spent with my dad in the hospital. I had to visit him in the hospital and he was looking at me as if saying sorry that we had to spend Christmas in the hospital. But I was happy because I had been seeing him only a few times since we were not allowed to stay in the hospital. He was discharged a few months after and he died a few days following my birthday.

Snooky. I was 5 years old and my favorite uncle dressed up as Santa Claus. Sold *na* sold *ako* that I finally got to meet Santa. Would you believe that up to this day, I believe in my heart of hearts that there is a Santa Claus?

China Cojuangco. My most memorable Christmas was when our parents asked my sisters and I to write letters to Santa so they could mail them to the North Pole. Then on Christmas Day, my parents would tell us that Santa received our letters. They would lead us to the walk-in closet, telling us that we would find all our presents from Santa there.

Marvin Agustin. Every Christmas is a memorable one because that's the time I get to see all the people I love and I think that's the true meaning of Christmas.

Nina. My most unforgettable Christmas experience was in 1999. It was the last Christmas I celebrated with my dad before he went to the States to work. We had a lot of fun and he bought us whatever we wanted.

Monsour del Rosario. My most memorable Christmas was when my family were together. That was the last time we were complete. After that we were never the same again.

Pia Guanio. When the whole family spent Christmas in the States. The whole family was there and we did all the cliché things. We cooked turkey with all the trimmings ever. Cut and dragged home a real tree. We did everything ourselves, which was loads of fun.

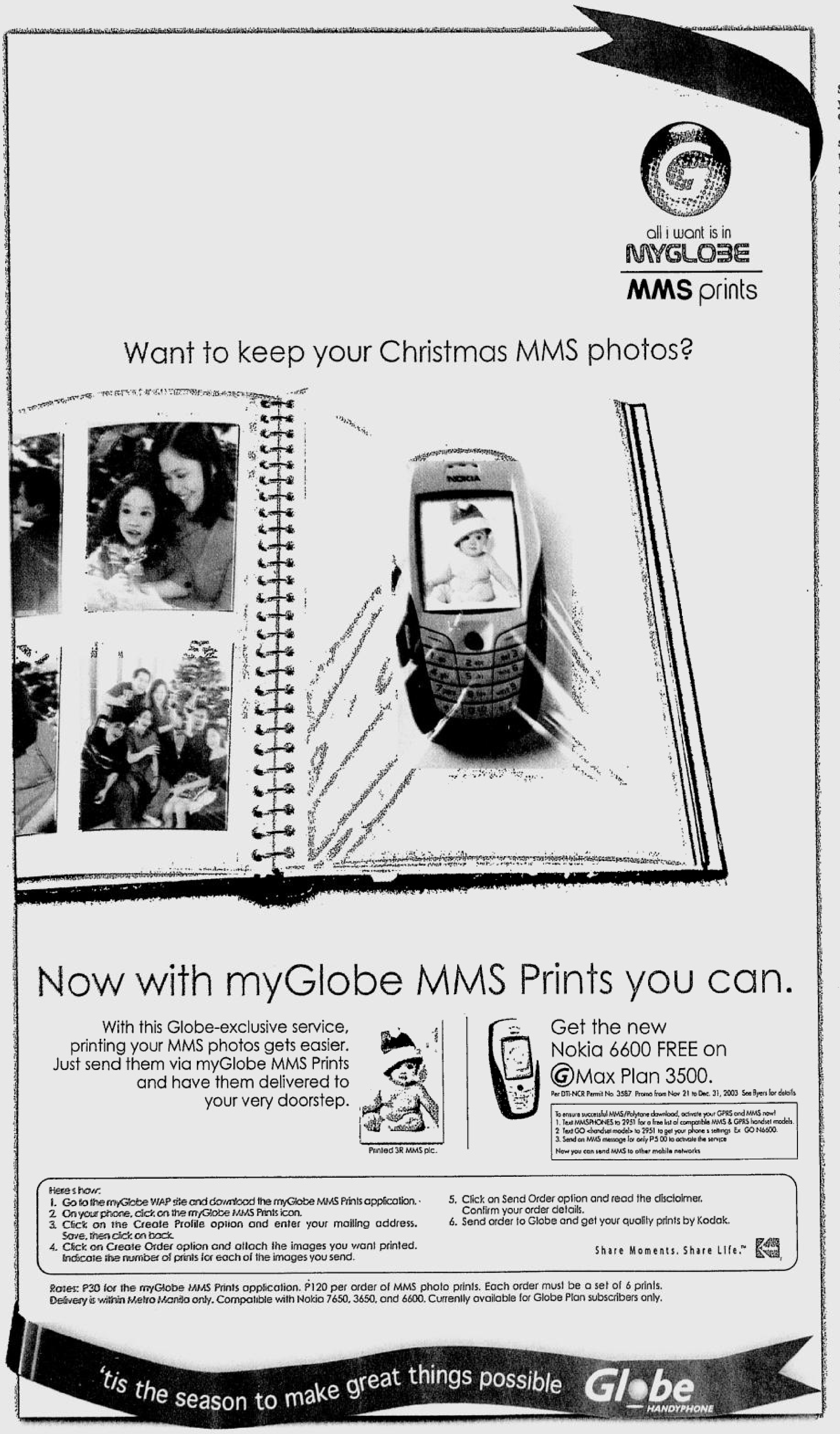
Miriam Quiambao. In my family, it's the New Year that's the biggest event because that's when we hold a theme reunion. We just sleep on Christmas Eve. But my most memorable Christmas Eve was with my Italian boyfriend. We had just gotten engaged during that time. We heard Mass, bought red wine, some ham and bread. We went to my place, deemed the lights, lit some candles, put on some music, exchanged gifts and had a little *noche buena*. It was my most romantic Christmas ever.

Ces Drilon. One of my most enduring memories of Christmas was when I was 6 years old or so. I asked Santa for a toy oven which I spotted in an American toy store. My mom and dad said that if I were a good girl, maybe Santa would give it to me. On Christmas Eve, my parents said there was something for me under the tree but I had to sleep first. I tossed and turned in bed and couldn't sleep. On Christmas morning, behold, under the tree was my gift! It made me so happy! Oh, to bring back the simple joys!

Albert Martinez. All my Christmas memories are meaningful, but the most memorable Christmas was my first one in America. It was sad and happy. Sad because my parents and sisters were here in Manila, and happy and excited because Alyanna was born 22 days before Christmas and it was my first Christmas with Liezel.

Princess Punzalan. Dec. 25, 1991 was the saddest because Mama (Helen Vela) was dying. Dec. 25, 2001 was when Papa and I had a good time catching up as father and daughter.

For feedback, email friends_elpueblo@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com



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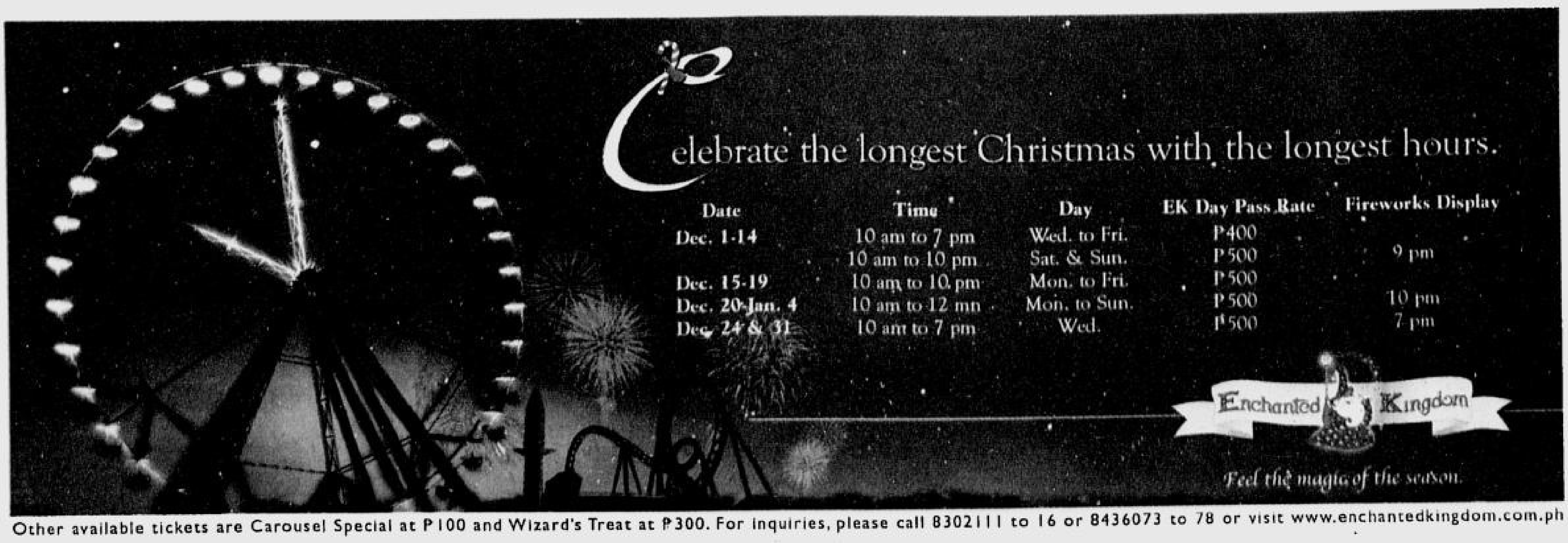

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Dec. 20-Jan. 4	10 am to 12 mn	Mon. to Sun.	P500	10 pm
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Japan firm bags power projects worth P5.6B

By Ronnel W. Domingo

STATE-RUN PNOC Energy Development Corp. last week signed contracts with Japan's Kanematsu Corp. for geothermal projects worth P5.6 billion, a company official said.

PNOC-EDC chair and president Sergio Apostol said in an interview Kanematsu was contracted to build a 40-megawatt power plant near Mt. Kanlaon in Negros Occidental and another 26-MW project in Palinpinon, Southern Negros.

Apostol said PNOC-EDC had an existing credit line with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation which would cover the $82-million project in the Kanlaon area while the state-owned Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) was financing the P1.1-billion Palinpinon project.

The Kanlaon project is full turnkey, including the engineering design, supply, delivery, installation, testing and commissioning of the power plant.

Apostol said the Kanlaon plant would not only be PNOC-EDC's first fully owned facility but also the country's first power project to operate as a merchant plant under the new industry environment.

An operator of a merchant plant can sell electricity to any buyer as it does not have a supply contract with a distributor or end-user.

Under the merchant plant option, PNOC-EDC would have to pay only wheeling charges for the use of the state-owned National Transmission Corp.'s transmission lines and the electric cooperatives' distribution lines for the delivery of electricity to consumers.

Before the passage of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001, independent power producers (IPPs) like PNOC-EDC had to sell all generated electricity to National Power Corp. through a power purchase agreement.

Also known as the Northern Negros geothermal plant, the facility would be the first power-generating plant in Negros Occidental, which currently imports its entire power needs from Negros Oriental.

Apostol added that while PNOC-EDC planned to put up only a 20-MW optimization plant in Palinpinon, Kanematsu's bid provided for 26 MW.

The official added that the project, which is expected to be completed within two years, would also operate as a merchant plant.

Under the Palinpinon contract, Kanematsu is tasked to build the plant and the transmission line, as well as develop the geothermal steam field.

PNOC-EDC's Palinpinon geothermal field is currently host to Napocor's 192.5-MW power complex, which was commissioned in 1983.

"All we need now to push ahead is Malacañang's approval. We need to secure this approval since the projects cost more than P50 million each," Apostol explained.

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VX200	860,000	129,000	62,609	43,236	34,398	24,714	20,205	17,158
SR	825,000	123,750	60,001	41,376	32,920	23,652	19,336	16,420
GSX	790,000	118,500	57,303	39,515	31,441	22,589	18,468	15,690
GLX	750,000	112,500	54,220	37,389	29,752	21,376	17,475	14,846
GL	678,000	101,700	46,670	33,562	26,710	19,190	15,689	13,326
DLX	643,000	96,450	45,972	31,702	25,232	18,128	14,280	12,589

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TOYOTA

Napocor steps up bid to move power plant to Panay Island

By Ronnel W. Domingo

NATIONAL Power Corp. has stepped up efforts to transfer the 108-MW Pinamucan power plant to energy-hungry Panay Island as it pared down the possible contract cost of about P670 million through solicited proposals from groups led by DM Consunji Inc. and EEI Corp.

The state firm had called for sealed proposals from three proponents, which submitted these last Dec. 19, after a bidding for the contract failed early this month as the offers exceeded the budget of P535 million.

DMCI-led Dingle II Consortium submitted the lowest-priced proposal at P664 million, besting bids from an EEI Corp.-led group at P673 million and First Philippine Balfour Beatty at P1.1 billion.

"We have opened the proposals and are still evaluating them," a Napocor official said. "Only Dingle II and EEI submitted their proposals, but we definitely got better proposals compared to their previous bids."

A Napocor official said the company required that the contractor complete the power plant transfer within 360 days.

Napocor is hard-pressed to provide additional power to Panay due to the power shortage in the island.

Records from the Energy Department showed that power demand in the four-province island is hitting a high of 125 megawatts against a power supply of 73 megawatts, resulting in a shortage of 52 megawatts.

The appointed contractor would be responsible for the dismantling, hauling, and installation of the eight generator sets from Pinamucan in Batangas to Dingle, Iloilo, on Panay Island where dependable generating capacity is only at 73 MW while demand was hitting as high as 125 MW, reflecting a shortage of 52 MW.

The Pinamucan facility has four 12.5-MW units and four 14.63-MW sets. The power complex belonged to Enron Philippines before its 10-year build-operate-transfer (BOT) contract with Napocor expired last July.

Meantime, Napocor had called for proposals from power companies on the lease of power generating sets that would be used to address creeping electricity shortages on the islands of Panay, Mindoro and Palawan.

Napocor had also invited suppliers of diesel-engine generators for the supply and delivery of 29 units for energizing remote villages, which industry data showed would cost a total of about P980.5 million.

Silvano C. Zanoria, chair of Napocor's contracts award committee, said in a notice to suppliers that the generators—representing a total of 28.5 megawatts of capacity—would be used for missionary electrification in Luzon and Mindanao.

Gov't seen tapping bond mart in 2004

By Doris C. Dumlao

IT IS inevitable for the Philippine government to brave the global bond market again despite jitters over the forthcoming May 2004 presidential elections, Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said.

"We have anticipated some borrowing requirements for next year, but necessarily, because of the budget deficits and the need for Napocor (National Power Corp.) to finance its deficit, we have to run back to the international financial market," Neri said in a yearend briefing.

"Also, we have maturing dollar obligations that we must cover," Neri added.

Asked whether he expected the need to tap the foreign bond market again to occur before the elections, Neri said: "Before and after the elections."

The government has so far pre-funded more than $1 billion of its 2004 financing requirements in recent months, anticipating demand for a higher premium as the presidential elections draw nearer.

It has raised $250 million from a eurobond issue as well as some $800 million in net proceeds from its long-term bond issuance.

The finance department earlier said the government would likely miss its consolidated public sector deficit ceiling this year due to mounting losses from state utility Napocor.

The government had wanted to cap the public sector deficit at P288.26 billion but Napocor's deficit was turning out to be bigger than expected.

The utility projects to incur losses of as much as P70 billion this year after its deficit hit P34 billion in the first half alone.

The government borrowed on behalf of Napocor twice last year, raising a total of $750 million. This year, it raised another $750 million.

Overall, Neri maintained that the government's deficit was still manageable, noting though that larger deficits tended to choke the country's economic growth.

US Ambassador Francis J. Ricciardone Jr. tours the factory of Amkor Technology Philippines Inc. and learns firsthand of the firm's turaround performance.

PTT to buy El Paso's stake in Philippine oil venture

BANGKOK—Thailand's largest oil and gas firm PTT PCL will take over a 50 percent stake in a Philippine oil joint-venture from energy group El Paso Corp. for $33 million, the Thai firm said on Tuesday.

PTT, which holds the other 50 percent stake in the Subic Bay joint-venture, said it signed a pact on Monday for all El Paso shares in the venture.

The Subic Bay joint venture is made up of three companies with a combined registered capital of $7 million.

"Since PTT has considered the Philippines as the potential market which could create synergy to PTT's group, PTT has signed a share-purchasing agreement to purchase the group's shares from El Paso," PTT said in a statement.

The group comprised Subic Bay Energy Co., Subic Bay Fuel Co. and Subic Bay Distribution Inc.

These companies are involved in trading and distributing oil products to and from the Philippines, it said.

Houston-based El Paso's sales of the Philippine asset was part of its worldwide plan to sell up to $3.9 billion in assets and to cut debt by about a third by 2005.

PTT said the transaction involved no cash from PTT since the Thai firm would pay El Paso for its 50 percent stake with half of the total cash, inventory and other assets of the group.

The total assets, valued at the end of December, was estimated at $33 million, PTT said.

PTT shares closed unchanged at 137 baht at the midday break. *Reuters*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 23, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17	17.25	17	17.25	25,600
Bank of the Phil. Islands	46	46.5	46	46.5	334,600
China Banking Corp.	675	675	675	675	380
Citystate Savings Bank	16	16	16	16	5,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	34	34	34	34	98,400
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.55	0.56	0.55	0.56	1,430,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	27	27	26.5	26.5	113,100
Philippine National Bank	24.25	24.25	24	24.25	42,500
Phil. Savings Bank	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	5,000
Security Bank Corp.	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	5,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	25	27	25	27	600
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2.34	2.34	2.3	2.3	50,000
First Abacus Financial	0.44	0.5	0.44	0.5	320,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	170	170	170	170	250
Manulife Financial Corp.	1740	1750	1735	1750	1,590
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.32	1.34	1.32	1.34	431,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	210	210	210	210	11,200
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1305	1320	1305	1320	880
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	25.5	25.5	25.5	25.5	38,700
Diversified Fin. Network	2	2	2	2	5,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.69	0.7	0.69	0.7	3,650,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	845	845	845	845	26,090
Ipeople Inc.	0.97	0.99	0.97	0.98	540,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.04	0.04	0.039	0.04	2,500,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	0.9	0.91	0.89	0.9	5,180,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	950	950	930	935	39,970
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	51,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	14.75	14.75	14.75	14.75	66,000
Manila Electric Co. B	24	24.25	24	24.25	228,300
Petron Corp.	2.24	2.36	2.24	2.32	10,265,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2.06	2.06	2.06	2.06	50,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.95	0.96	0.95	0.96	300,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	209,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	125,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	310,000
Union Cement Corp.	1	1	1	1	11,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	4,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	32	32	32	32	9,500
Jollibee Foods Corp.	17.5	18.25	17.5	18.25	634,700
San Miguel Corp. A	53.5	54	53.5	54	43,400
San Miguel Corp. B	63	63.5	63	63.5	83,800
Universal Robina Corp.	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	10,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	300,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	5,000
Ayala Corp.	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.3	5,210,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	9,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.025	0.023	0.025	4,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.84	0.86	0.84	0.86	3,510,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	3,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	30,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	10,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.49	0.49	0.48	0.48	180,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.175	0.18	290,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	100,000
Aries Prima Res. Inc.	1.98	1.98	1.98	1.98	7,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	18.75	18.75	18.5	18.75	164,600
Ionics Inc.	1.44	1.44	1.44	1.44	2,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.04	1.06	1.04	1.06	3,601,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	1	1	1	1	100,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.28	10,290,000
Music Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	250,000
South China Resources Inc	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	90,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.34	0.37	0.34	0.37	50,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.88	1	0.88	1	40,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	6.9	7.2	6.9	7	15,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	2,000,000
Prime Gaming Phils. Inc.	26	26	26	26	1,000
Pryce Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1,500,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13	13	13	13	323,800
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.55	1,530,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	20,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	2,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	25	25	25	25	563,700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series M	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	500
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,500
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	7	7.1	7	7	11,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6	6.1	6	6	6,888,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	100,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	500,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.215	0.22	1,100,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	1,000,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.0775	0.0775	0.0775	0.0775	100,000
SM Development Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.04	1.04	9,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.5	6.5	6.4	6.5	2,554,000
MINING					
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	1,370,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	1,710,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	8,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.37	0.38	0.37	0.38	1,150,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41	200,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	30,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	10,000,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	400,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	2,878,100	31,793,095.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	112,538,160	180,957,125.00
PRO	12,251,000	59,301,610.00
Mining	12,430,000	1,371,250.00
OIL	40,400,000	192,000.00
GRAND TOTALS:	180,497,260	273,615,080.00

	AVERAGES	
Bank & Fin Svc	436.85	UP 5.48
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,157.00	UP 6.72
PRO	568.53	UP 2.79
Mining	1,589.00	DOWN 9.37
OIL	1.26	UP 0.05
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	861.49	UP 9.99
Composite	1,427.40	UP 6.37

NO. OF ADVANCES: 38; NO. OF DECLINES: 16; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 41; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 95; NO. OF TRADES: 1,328

CURRENCIES

December 24, 2003 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.806517	1.000000	55.464000
Japan	Yen	0.007502	0.009302	0.515900
United Kingdom	Pound	1.422534	1.763800	97.827400
Hongkong	Dollar	0.103892	0.128816	7.144700
Switzerland	Franc	0.641263	0.795102	44.099500
Canada	Dollar	0.606221	0.751654	41.689700
Singapore	Dollar	0.472008	0.585240	32.459800
Australia	Dollar	0.591808	0.733783	40.698500
Bahrain	Dinar	2.139302	2.652520	147.119400
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.215054	0.266645	14.789200
Brunei	Dollar	0.470629	0.583533	32.365100
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000118	0.006500
Thailand	Baht	0.020377	0.025265	1.401300
UAE	Dirham	0.219610	0.272294	15.102500
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.239900	68.769800
Argentina	Peso	0.272472	0.337838	18.737800
Brazil	Real	0.275826	0.341997	18.968500
Denmark	Kroner	0.134386	0.166625	9.241700
India	Rupee	0.017753	0.022012	1.220900
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.212270	0.263193	14.597700
Mexico	New Peso	0.071392	0.088519	4.909600
New Zealand	Dollar	0.517130	0.641190	35.563000
Norway	Kroner	0.119772	0.148505	8.236700
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014112	0.017498	0.970500
South Africa	Rand	0.116910	0.144957	8.039900
Korea	Won	0.000676	0.000838	0.046500
Sweden	Kroner	0.110052	0.136454	7.568300
Syria	Pound	0.018226	0.022599	1.253400
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023756	0.029455	1.633700
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000506	0.000627	0.034800

Another US firm sets up outsourcing office in RP

By Michelle V. Remo

US-BASED information technology firm Global Additions has joined the growing list of foreign firms setting up business process outsourcing facilities in the country as part of their offshore expansion plans, the Department of Trade and Industry announced.

The company is targeting to employ about 300 professionals.

Global Additions president Sandra Wing recently met with DTI representatives to discuss the company's operations in the Philippines and to finalize preparations for the setting up of its BPO office.

Wing also said she has started discussions with local IT firms over a possible joint venture deal to facilitate the setting up of its Philippine office.

"Considering the urgent need of our firm, we want to set up immediate operations, preferably by the first quarter of next year," she said in a statement.

Wing said Global Additions has chosen the Philippines and India as the sites for its offshore operations among a number of other countries.

Global Additions' decision to invest in the Philippines followed promotional activities done by the DTI in the United States.

The government agency has crafted programs to promote the Philippines as Asia's e-services hub and is eyeing to grab the lead spot from India.

It was also preparing to conduct an IT roadshow in various countries next year to double the existing number of BPO and call center firms in the country.

The Board of Investments said it has been receiving more inquiries from foreign firms about the possibility of expanding in the country.

Firms that have tapped Filipino IT services for their BPO operations include AIG Business Processing Services, Caltex Shared Service Center, Procter & Gamble Asia Pte. Ltd., Alitalia, Maersk Administrative Center and UPS Asia Consolidated Service Center.

These firms currently employ over a thousand Filipino professionals.

Demand for Spanish-speaking call center agents to rise

By Abigail L. Ho

WITH the Hispanic population in the United States continuing to grow, contact center specialist Source One Communications Asia said the demand for Spanish-speaking customer service representatives might increase in 2004.

In a statement issued Tuesday, the company disclosed that the rising demand for Spanish-speaking call center agents might likewise bring more contact center business to Asia and to the Philippines next year.

Source One director for Asian operations Nathan Shapiro related that, from having only five Spanish-speaking agents in May 2002, the contact center now had almost 30 of these agents, with demand continuing to rise.

The contact center specialist first went into the Spanish-speaking segment in 2002. It now had a few big clients that had demand for such call center agents.

According to the year 2000 United States census, Hispanics made up almost 13 percent of the American population, even surpassing the number of African-Americans residing there. Hispanics now made up the largest minority group in the United States.

Just recently, Shapiro said that Source One deployed 20 Spanish-speaking call center agents and nine translators for two major clients with Spanish-speaking customers.

The nine translators were deployed to assist the customer service representatives, in case some customers say things that the call center agents might not know or understand.

Shapiro explained that these translators were still necessary at the moment as Source One had yet to start implementing Spanish-language training for its agents.

However, he said it now made business sense to hire Spanish-speaking agents because of the increasing demand for such customer service representatives.

Like with hiring English-speaking agents, the criteria for employing Spanish-speaking agents included fluency in the language as well as some acquaintance with the culture.

"We assess their fluency through a series of tests. They must be fluent or we don't get them. We are looking at adding language training by 2004 to meet the growing demand," Shapiro said.

Some of this demand, he said, could likewise be channeled to offshore sites like the Philippines, the national language of which had a close affinity with the Spanish language.

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Araneta Center

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7

Ali 1	MANO PO 2
Ali 2	FILIPINAS
Ali 3	CAPTAIN BARBEL
Ali 4	CRYING LADIES
Ali 5	MALIKMATA
Ali 6	FANTASTIC MAN
Ali 7	HOMECOMING

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DEC 28	DISNEY ON ICE - 1PM / 4:30PM / 8PM
DEC 29	DISNEY ON ICE - 4:30PM / 8 PM
DEC 30	DISNEY ON ICE - 1PM / 4:30PM / 8PM
JAN 1	DISNEY ON ICE - 4:30PM / 8 PM

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THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA

EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY LEGEND OF PROCORPLE

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATA
CORONET A	ALIPIN
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	LIBERATED
B	AKO, IKAW, SIYA
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	BIKTIMA
CINEMA-2	ALIPIN
CINEMA-3	WAG KANG KIKIBO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	MR. SUAVE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 1
CINEMA-6	CHAVIT
CINEMA-7	BABAE SA BREAKWATER
CINEMA-8	ASBOOBS
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LOST ISLAND
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LORDS OF THE RINGS 2
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	STAR RUNNER
CINEMA-12	CABIN FEVER
CINEMA-14	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-15	TIE

LORES

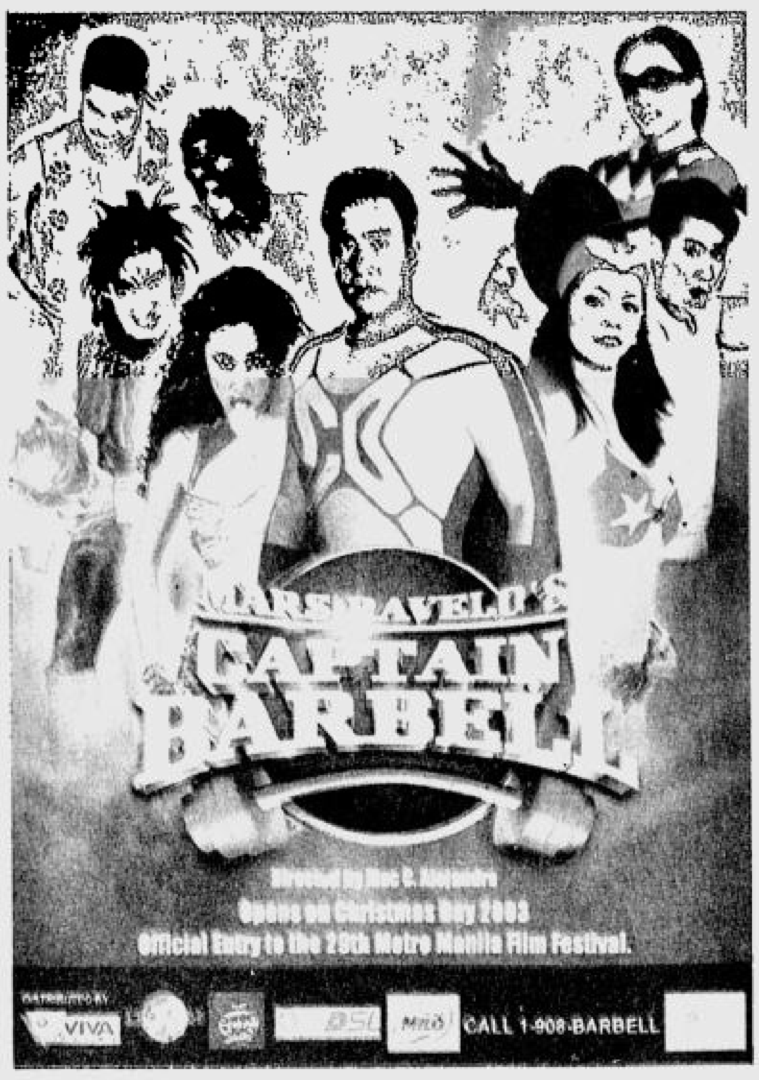
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PINAS)	OUT OF TIME
CINEMA-1	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-2	FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS
CINEMA-4	BOLD CREEK MANOR

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK I
CINEMA-4	SFIDA



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RICKY DAVAO
WOWIE DE GUZMAN
ANNA CAPRI
NIKKI VALDEZ
AND
MS. BARBARA PEREZ
RICA PERALEJO
MALIKMATA
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DIRECTED BY JOSE JAVIER REYES dgpi
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ALICIA MAYER
VIC SOTTO
FANTASTIC MAN
DIRECTED BY
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ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK FROM OCTOARTS - ORBIT MUSIC

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PRESENTS

G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB1 GREENBELT 1	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER
1 MANO PO 2	1 MANO PO 2	ArtFilm 1 FANTASTIC MAN 11:30, 2:05, 4:30, 7:05, 9:30	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 1 MANO PO 2 12:50, 3:30, 6:10, 8:50, 11:30	THX 1 MALIKMATA
2 FANTASTIC MAN	2 HOMECOMING	2 MALIKMATA 11:05, 1:10, 3:15, 5:20, 7:25, 9:30	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 HOMECOMING 12:40, 2:50, 5:00, 7:10, 9:20, 11:30	2 CRYING LADIES
3 MALIKMATA	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 FANTASTIC MAN 12:30, 3:00, 5:30, 8:00, 10:30	GLOW Dec 29 & 30 - 8pm	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 FILIPINAS 11:00, 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00, 11:30	3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 CAPTAIN BARBEL	4 FILIPINAS		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 CAPTAIN BARBEL 11:00, 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00, 11:30	4 CAPTAIN BARBEL
	5 MALIKMATA		GUARANTEED SEATS 5 HOMECOMING 11:00, 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00, 11:30	5 HOMECOMING
	6 CRYING LADIES			
	7 CAPTAIN BARBEL			

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1	CAPT. BARBEL
2	MALIKMATA
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	HOMECOMING
5	CRYING LADIES
6	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
7	MANO PO-2
8	CRYING LADIES
9	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
10	MANO PO-2

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2	HOMECOMING
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	MALIKMATA

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290, 833.3274

1	MANO PO-2
2	HOMECOMING
3	FANTASTIC MAN

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(Mandaluyong) tel 724.4986

1	CRYING LADIES
2	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL E	HOMECOMING
5	MANO PO-2

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Alabang) tel 850.4285

1	MANO PO-2
2	HOMECOMING
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
5	MALIKMATA
6	CAPT. BARBEL

star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Las Pinas)
tel 873.5004

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	CAPT BARBEL

PREMIERE CINEMA
(Makati City) tel 892.2503

THX

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1	MANO PO
2	FANTASTIC MAN

Sunshine
(FTI, Taguig) tel 838.4301 loc. 3376

1	CRYING LADIES
2	CAPT. BARBEL
3	HOMECOMING
4	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

GOTESCO CINEMA

Gotesco City
(Manila) tel 734.8588

5	MALIKMATA
6	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
7 (DTS)	CRYING LADIES
8	HOMECOMING
9	MANO PO-2

Gotesco Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364.3781

1	MANO PO-2
2	HOMECOMING
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES
7 (DTS)	CAPT. BARBEL
8	CRYING LADIES
9	MANO PO-2

Gotesco Commonwealth
tel 951.0083

1	CAPT. BARBEL
2	HOMECOMING
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
5	MANO PO-2

Gotesco Ortigas
tel 656.6795

1	CRYING LADIES
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	HOMECOMING
4	MANO PO-2
5	MALIKMATA

Universal
(Manila) tel 733.2470

1	RESERVE

Dilson
(Manila) tel 734.7724

Dilson Lords	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
2	MALIKMATA
3	CRYING LADIES
4	CAPT. BARBEL

Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
SUPER CINERAMA
tel 733.4238

1	MANO PO-2
2	CAPT. BARBEL
3	MALIKMATA
4	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
5	FANTASTIC MAN

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

1	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
2	MALIKMATA

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT
Araneta Center

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7

1	MANO PO-2
2	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
3	CAPT. BARBEL
4	CRYING LADIES
5	MALIKMATA
6	FANTASTIC MAN
7	HOMECOMING
8	
9	

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
3	MANO PO-2
4	CAPT. BARBEL

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121

1	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
2	CAPT. BARBEL
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	MANO PO-2

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489

1	MANO PO-2
2	CRYING LADIES
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926

1	MANO PO-2
2	HOMECOMING
3	CRYING LADIES

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1	RUGRATS THE MOVIE
2	WISHER
3	CABIN FEVER
4	MR. BONES

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146

1	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
2	HOMECOMING
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	MANO PO-2

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1	MANO PO-2
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	MALIKMATA

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1	CRYING LADIES
2	MALIKMATA
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	MANO PO-2

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel)

1	MANO PO-2
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	SOON TO OPEN

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1	MALIKMATA
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	HOMECOMING
4	MANO PO-2

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1	CAPT. BARBEL
2	CRYING LADIES
3	MALIKMATA
4	MANO PO-2
5	FANTASTIC MAN

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	HOMECOMING

Olivarez Los Baños
tel (049) 249.2558

1	CAPT. BARBEL
2	MALIKMATA
3	HOMECOMING

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283

1	CAPT. BARBEL
2	MANO PO-2
3	CRYING LADIES
4	FANTASTIC MAN

Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel 520.8914

1	MANO PO-2

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1	MANO PO-2
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
4	CAPT BARBEL

Emperor
(Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657

1	FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
2	MALIKMATA

*Movies are subject to change without prior notice

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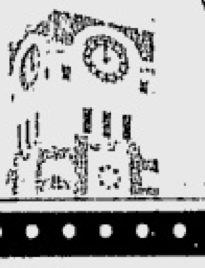

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1 MANO PO 2
2 HOMECOMING
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 FILIPINAS
5 MALIKMATA
6 CRYING LADIES
7 CAPTAIN BARBELL
8 FILIPINAS

SM CITY CEBU
2313676

1 MANO PO 2
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 HOMECOMING
4 FILIPINAS
5 CRYING LADIES
6 MANO PO 2
7 MALIKMATA
8 CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY BACOOR
4173666

1 CRYING LADIES
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 FILIPINAS
4 HOMECOMING
5 MANO PO 2
6 MALIKMATA
7 CAPTAIN BARBELL
8 CRYING LADIES

SM CITY PAMPANGA
[illegible]

1 MANO PO 2
2 HOMECOMING
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 FILIPINAS
5 CRYING LADIES
6 MANO PO 2

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT
8294375

1 CRYING LADIES
2 CAPTAIN BARBELL
3 MALIKMATA
4 FILIPINAS

SM BICUTAN
7763055

1 MANO PO 2
2 HOMECOMING
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY MARILAO

1 MALIKMATA
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 HOMECOMING
4 MANO PO 2

SM STA. MESA
7140522 • 7161416

1 MANO PO 2
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 FILIPINAS
4 HOMECOMING
5 CRYING LADIES
6 CAPTAIN BARBELL
7 MALIKMATA
8 HOMECOMING
9 CAPTAIN BARBELL
10 FANTASTIC MAN

SM SOUTHMALL
8066888

1 MALIKMATA
2 FILIPINAS
3 CRYING LADIES
4 HOMECOMING
5 MANO PO 2
6 FILIPINAS
7 CAPTAIN BARBELL
8 FANTASTIC MAN
9 MALIKMATA
10 MANO PO 2

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
9350749

1 FANTASTIC MAN
2 CAPTAIN BARBELL
3 HOMECOMING
4 MALIKMATA
5 FILIPINAS
6 CRYING LADIES
7 MANO PO 2
8 FANTASTIC MAN
9 CAPTAIN BARBELL
10 MALIKMATA
11 CRYING LADIES
12 HOMECOMING

SM CITY DAVAO
2976338

1 MANO PO 2
2 HOMECOMING
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 FILIPINAS
5 MALIKMATA
6 CRYING LADIES

SM CITY LUCENA
(042) 7108977-89

1 CAPTAIN BARBELL
2 MANO PO 2
3 FILIPINAS
4 FANTASTIC MAN

SM MEGAMALL
6331901 • 6339401

1 FANTASTIC MAN
RESERVE-A-SEAT dial 6386800
2 CRYING LADIES
3 HOMECOMING
4 MANO PO 2
5 FILIPINAS
6 CAPTAIN BARBELL
7 MANO PO 2
8 CRYING LADIES
9 MALIKMATA
10 FANTASTIC MAN
11 CAPTAIN BARBELL
12 FILIPINAS

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN
2514902

1 CAPTAIN BARBELL
2 CRYING LADIES
3 HOMECOMING
4 MANO PO 2

SM CITY ILOILO
3380422

1 MALIKMATA
2 RESERVED
3 FILIPINAS
4 FANTASTIC MAN
5 CRYING LADIES
6 MANO PO 2
7 RESERVED
8 CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY MANILA
5239240

1 FILIPINAS
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 HOMECOMING
4 MANO PO 2
5 MALIKMATA
6 CRYING LADIES
7 HOMECOMING
8 FILIPINAS
9 CAPTAIN BARBELL
10 FANTASTIC MAN
11 CRYING LADIES
12 MALIKMATA

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
(088) 8593884

1 MALIKMATA
2 CRYING LADIES
3 CAPTAIN BARBELL
4 MANO PO 2

SM CITY BAGUIO
(074) 4464595

1 MANO PO 2
2 CAPTAIN BARBELL
3 CRYING LADIES
4 FANTASTIC MAN

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1 FANTASTICMAN
12:20 FS/12:50 MF/3:10/5:30/7:50/9:40 LFS/10:10 LMF/12:00 END

2 MANO PO 2
11:00 FS/11:20 MF/2:00/4:40/7:20/9:30 LFS/10:00 LMF/12:10 END

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2 HOMECOMING
3 CAPTAIN BARBELL
4 FANTASTIC MAN
5 MALIKMATA
6 FILIPINAS
7 CRYING LADIES
8 MALIKMATA
9 FILIPINAS
10 CRYING LADIES

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Ermita
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1 MANO PO 2
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 FILIPINAS
4 MALIKMATA
5 CAPTAIN BARBELL
6 HOMECOMING
7 CRYING LADIES

Metro East
Marcos hway
682-8193/99
682-8280

1 MALIKMATA
2 HOMECOMING
3 MANO PO 2
4 FILIPINAS
5 CRYING LADIES
6 CAPTAIN BARBELL
7 FANTASTIC MAN
8 FILIPINAS

Novaliches
935-3229 / 31

1 FANTASTIC MAN
2 FILIPINAS
3 MALIKMATA
4 CRYING LADIES
5 CAPTAIN BARBELL
6 MANO PO 2
7 HOMECOMING
8 MANO PO 2

Cainta
[illegible] Ortigas Extension

1 MALIKMATA
2 CRYING LADIES
3 CAPTAIN BARBELL
4 FANTASTIC MAN

Malabon
288-0985/2575

1 CAPTAIN BARBELL
2 CRYING LADIES
3 MALIKMATA
4 FILIPINAS

Sta. Rosa (049)837-0907		Lipa, Batangas (043)757-3664/312-5870
FANTASTIC MAN	1	MANO PO 2
FILIPINAS	2	FILIPINAS
MALIKMATA	3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
CRYING LADIES	4	FANTASTIC MAN
CAPTAIN BARBELL	5	MALIKMATA

Dasmariñas		Imus (046)471-8188 / 875-5850
MANO PO 2	1	FANTASTIC MAN
HOMECOMING	2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
FANTASTIC MAN	3	CRYING LADIES
CAPTAIN BARBELL	4	MANO PO 2
MALIKMATA	5	FILIPINAS
	6	HOMECOMING

Bacolod (034)441-0458-59		Iloilo (033)336-8070 to 78
MANO PO 2	1	MANO PO 2
FILIPINAS	2	FILIPINAS
CAPTAIN BARBELL	3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
FANTASTIC MAN	4	FANTASTIC MAN
MALIKMATA	5	MALIKMATA
ELF	6	CRYING LADIES

Star Mills
(045)875-1027
(045)961-5270

1 FANTASTIC MAN
2 CAPTAIN BARBELL
3 FILIPINAS
4 MALIKMATA
5 CRYING LADIES
6 MANO PO 2

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OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE MMFF 2003
OPENS JANUARY 1 !

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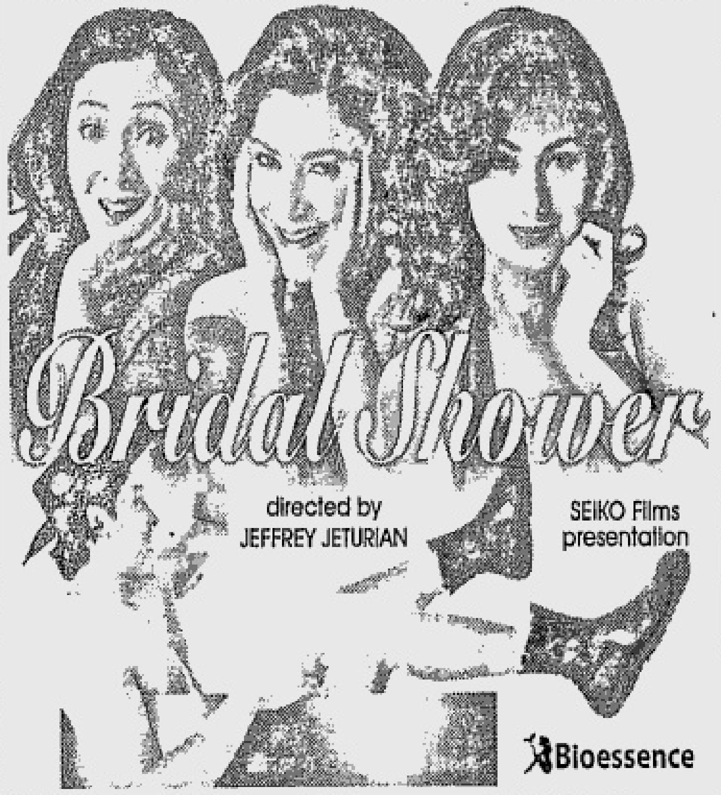

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Pelikula ni Joel Lamangan

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GP

CINEMA 2 HOMECOMING
PG 13

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DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND • EX

HOMECOMING PG13 1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50	FANTASTIKMAN GP 12:50, 3:10, 5:30, 7:50	MANO PO 2 GP 2:20, 5:00, 7:40
MALIKMATA PG13 1:25, 3:35, 5:45, 7:55	CRYING LADIES PG13 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45	FILIPINAS MAY ISANG INA GP 1:40, 3:50, 6:00, 8:10

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Place2/Homes/Sunrise
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San Mateo 2br1tb grg P1Mup
Cainta 3br 2tb garage P1.5M
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2% w/oTaking Car 8959454

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given of the extrajudicial settlement of the estate of WILFREDO V. WASAN w/waiver of shares executed by the heirs on Dec. 22, 2003 acknowledged bef. Atty. Elsa Verdadero-Perlas, Notary public in & for the City of Pasig entered in her notarial register as Doc. 2160, Page 53, Book CVIII, Series of 2003.
(PDI-Dec. 25, Jan. 1, & 8, 2003)

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PUBLIC NOTICES

PERSONAL

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED MOTHER (NEVER KNOWN TO FAIL) O most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel, fruitful vine splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God. Immaculate Virgin, assist me in this necessity. Oh star of the sea help me and show me. herein you are my Mother Oh Holy Mary, Mother of God. Queen of Heaven and Earth, I humbly beseech You from the bottom of My Heart to succor me in this necessity there are none that can withstand Your power. Oh show me herein You are Mother.
Oh Mary, conceived without sin. Pray for us who have recoursed to thee(3x).
Sweet Mother, I place this cause in Your hands(3x).
Thank you for your mercy toward me and being mine.
Thank you Mama Mary for answering my prayers. Amen.
(This prayer must be said for three days and after three days, your request will be granted and the prayer must be published.)

NOTICE FROM THE GRUPO MATEO PILIPINAS INVESTORS ASSOCIATION INC., TO ALL INVESTORS, THE CONCERNED AUTHORITIES AND
THE GENERAL PUBLIC
REVOCATION OF GENERAL POWER OF ATTORNEY

Know All Men By These Present:

That, WHEREAS, I, Ervin Y. Mateo now at the Makati City Jail, Kalayaan Avenue, Makati City executed at Pasig City, a certain instrument on the 10th day of March 2003 before Jinkee Santos, a Notary Public in and for Pasig City and registered under Doc. No. 464, Page No. 72; Book No. I, Series of 2003 of the registry of said Notary, did make constitute and appoint Southeast Economic and Environmental Development Corporation through Helen San Agustin, to be my true and lawful personal and corporate General Attorney-in Fact, for the purposes and with the powers therein set forth;

WHEREAS, I, the said Principal, now likewise in my personal and juridical capacities as Chairman, President, Partner, Majority Stockholder/Director in and any of all the subsidiaries/affiliate companies of the Companias de Mateo or the MMG Group of Companies now desire to terminate said General Power of Attorney.

NOW THEREFORE, I, Ervin Y. Mateo, in both my personal and juridical capacities as aforementioned, do hereby ANNUL, CANCEL, REVOKE, TERMINATE and RENDER INEFFECTIVE, beginning the day and place herein-mentioned below, the said General Power of Attorney, including any and all rights, powers, authorities and privileges therein and thereby vested in or given to said Southeast Economic and Development Corporation, (SEEDCORP) including its Chairwoman, Mrs. Helen San Agustin and any and all parties or persons acting, claiming or signing under or by virtue of any such authority, right or power from said General Attorney-in-Fact in any and all capacity whatsoever.

Notice is likewise given to the former General Attorney-in-Fact, SEEDCORP including its Chairwomen, Mrs. Helen San Agustin, all its officers and staff and all third parties acting for and under them to officers and staff and all third parties acting for and under them to please coordinate and cooperate with the duly-appointed representatives of the GRUPO MATEO PILIPINAS INVESTORS ASSOCIATION Inc. properly identified in their designation as such.

This Revocation is being published in accordance with law.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand at Makati City, this 24th day of November 2003 in both my personal and juridical capacities as Chairman, President, Partner, Majority Stockholder or Director of the MMG Group of Companies, its subsidiaries and affiliates.

Done at Makati City, Metro Manila this __ day of November 2003. A.D.

ERVIN Y. MATEO
Affiant
In His Personal Capacity

ERVIN Y. MATEO
Affiant
In His Juridical Capacity

Signed in the presence of: ________

Republic of the Philippines)
Makati City) s.s.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Before Me a Notary Public for and in Makati City, now being physically present at the Makati City Jail at Kalayaan Avenue, Makati City where affiant Ervin Y. Mateo is presently detained and for the special purpose of allowing him to personally acknowledge and swear to his free and voluntary act of acknowledging, in both his personal and corporate capacities, the foregoing Revocation of the General Power of Attorney consisting of Two (2) Pages including the page on which this acknowledgment is written, and after exhibiting to me his CTC No. 09257509 issued at Bacoor on January 7, 2002 together with his instrumental witnesses, now set my hand and seal on the day and place first above-mentioned

GERVACIO B. ORTIZ, JR.
Notary Public
Until Dec 31, 2003
PTR 184867 / Mla 1/2/03
TIN - 130-581-860

Doc. No. 667
Page No. 114
Book No. 14
Series of 2003

(PDI – December 25, 2003)

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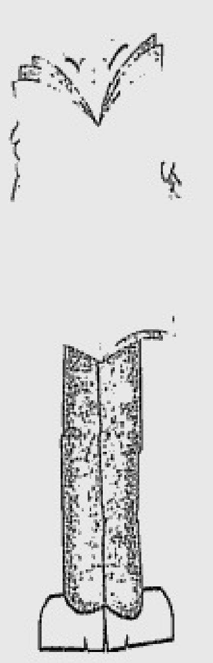

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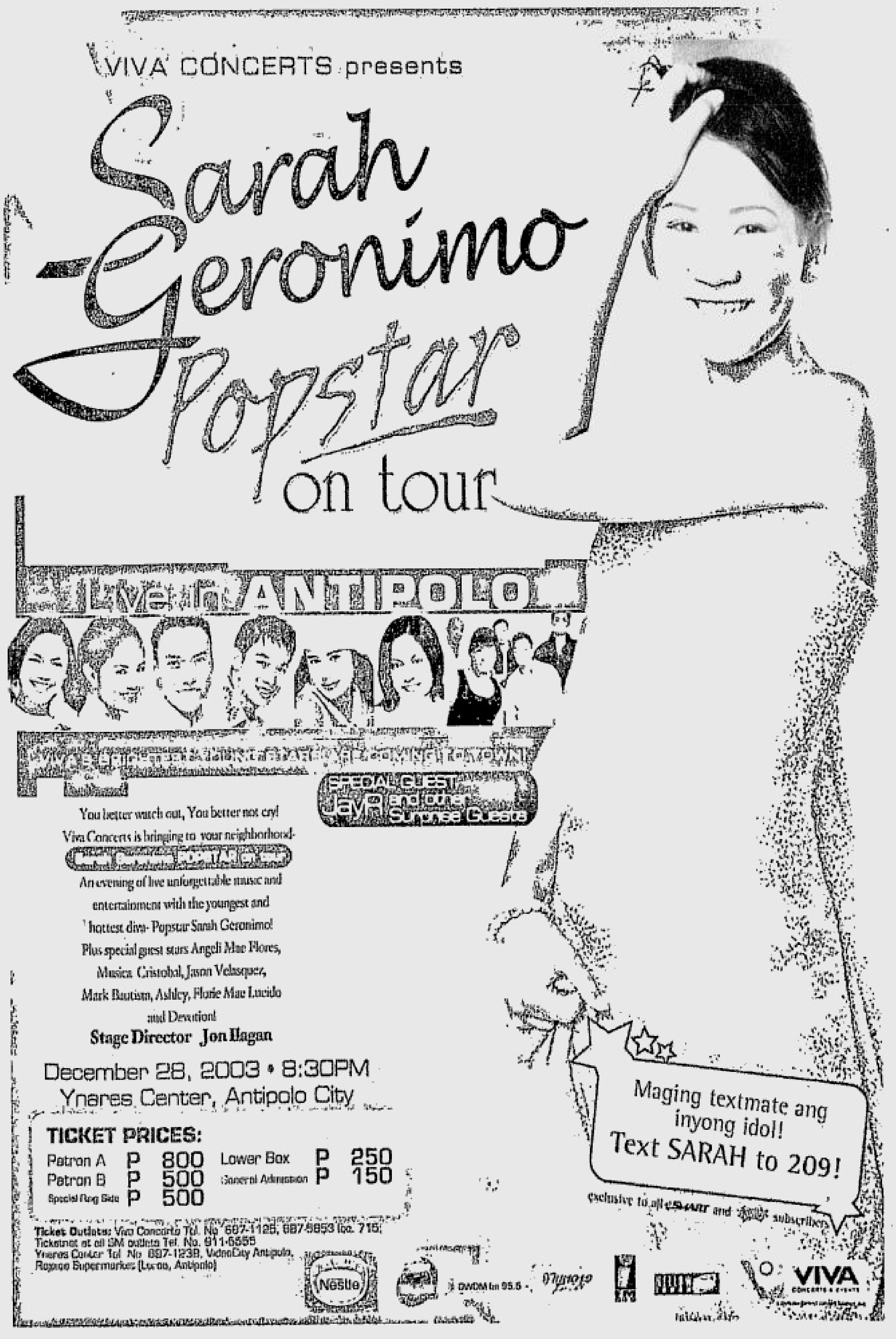

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OBITUARIES

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Monday to Sunday
12:00 noon
Day before publication

"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him , shall have eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day. **John 6:40**

Conchita T. Tan

Peacefully joined her Creator
on December 23, 2003 at the age of 72.

*Beloved mother to **Juanito Jr. & Ma. Milagros, Catherine Grace, Arthur & Cynthia, Stewart & Agnes**; grandmother to **Karen Grace, Joseph, Patrick, Samantha, Patricia Margaret, Rachelle Victoria**, and spouse to **Juanito** (†) who she now joins.*

Her remains lie in state at Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be at 9:00 a.m. on December 27, 2003 at Holy Cross Memorial Park, Novaliches.

Rebecca Marie "Memie" Berenguer-Zamora

Peacefully joined her Creator on December 23, 2003 at the age of 55.

Her dearest husband **Ramon "Babes" Recto** Zamora, Children: **Rico**, **Rafael** and **Joshua**; Parents: **Benjamin Sr.** † and **Guillerma**; Brothers and Sisters: **Honey** † and **Andy Silos**; **Manolo** † and **Norie**; **Bembim** and **Beng**; **Dolly** and **Aria Deldar**; **Cristy** and **Willy Bunyi**; **Maryanne** and **Bubut Jimenez**; **Jojo** and **Rose** request all those whose lives and hearts she touched to remember her in their prayers.

Her body lies in state at Chapel 2, St. Alphonsus Mary de Ligouri Parish Center, Magallanes Village, Makati City.

Interment will be on December 27, 2003, Saturday, at The Heritage Park, Bayani Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig immediately after the elevent a.m. Mass.

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies..." John 11:25 (NJV)

IN LOVING MEMORY

PIA ACAMPADO GUIUAN

Sept. 12, 1922 – Dec. 25, 2002

*We deeply remember our dearest **MOMMY PIA** who, as an educator, teacher, friend, mother, and inspiration to all, joined our loving Father and Creator on this special day of Christmas, December 25, 2002.*

*We ask our special friends and relatives to share with us the spirit of Christmas in this occasion through her love and passion for music. Let us all celebrate! We, her children and grandchildren (**Ed; Peach; Poisy & Onie w/ BJ; Paloo & Ming w/ Pauline, Paul, Debbie, Steph; Pam w/ Abby; Pippo & Enya w/ Ira, Gabe; Monette & Francis w/ Jonathan, Sarah; Priam & Marlyn w/ Kristy Anne** and **Pauline Anne**), would like to thank you so much for your great support and love for making her a special person in your lives.*

"Even when I walk through a dark valley, I feel no harm. For you are at my side, your rod and staff give me courage..."
Psalm 23:4

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

Deanna R. Buncio

who joined her Creator
on December 8, 2003

wish to convey our sincerest gratitude and deepest appreciation to all of you, our friends near and far, who offered masses, sent flowers and donations, mass cards, letters of sympathy, text messages, kept vigil, attended the funeral rites and comforted us in our many ways during our time of sadness and sorrow.

Your prayers gave us the strength to bear the unbearable. Your presence help soothe our pain. You were God's gentle hands, compassion and love. Thank you very much and Merry Christmas to you all!

Nonoy, Rorie and Nikolai

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."
John 3:16

Our Dearly Beloved Daddy

CARLOS "CARLING" REYNOSO VILLEGAS

Peacefully joined our Lord on the 23rd day of December, 2003 at the age of 57.

His wife **Conching**; children **Dex** & **Jona**, **Charlie** and **Christian**; and grandchildren **Ina** and **Ela**, request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Arlington East The Garden Chapels, 1354 C. Raymundo Ave. cor. Mercedes Avenue, Pasig City.

Interment will be announced later.

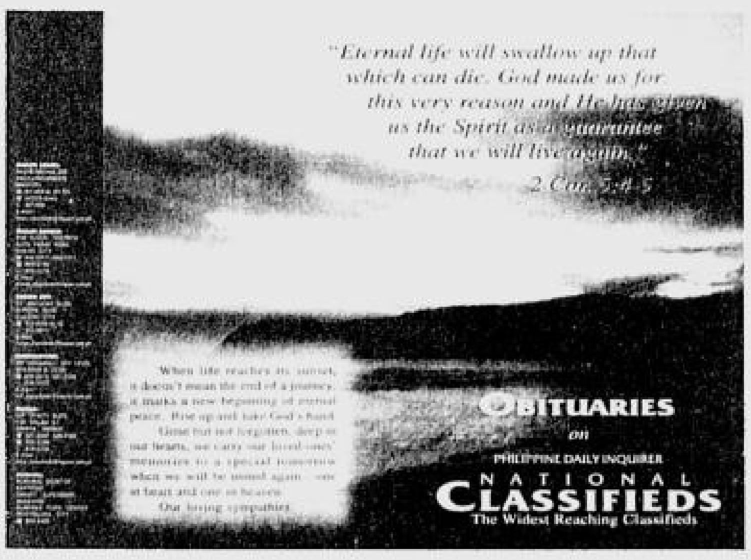
DEMETRIO PACELO TUVERA

Peacefully joined his Creator
on December 20, 2003 at the age of 88.

He is survived by his wife CELIA GALANG; children CARMEN, JULIE, MINNIE, MINA & ROGER, EMY & ANTHONY, RAYMUND and JAYJAY; grandchildren MICHAEL, RANDELL, CZARINA, DAVID and JOHN; siblings ANDRING & NITA, BAS & CED, FANNY, CERING and MARING.

His remains lie in state at Ambassador Funeral Homes, A. Mabini St. cor. C3, Caloocan City.

Interment will be on Saturday, December 27, 2003 at Ever Memorial Garden, along North Luzon Expressway thru Lawang Bato Tollway Exit after the 10:00 a.m. Necrological Service.



"Eternal life will swallow up that which can die. God made us for this very reason and He has given us the Spirit as a guarantee that we will live again."
2 Cor. 5:4-5

OBITUARIES
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"Forever you will remain in our hearts.
Thank you for being a devoted father,
a loving son and brother, and
a good soldier.

Our Dearly Beloved

COL. RAUL F. HEREDIA

PMA Class '75
Untimely joined his Creator on 23 December 2003
at the age of 49.

His bereaved parents **PEDRO** and **FILOMENA** (†); brothers **RENATO, ROMMEL & ROBERT**; sister **ROWENA**; relatives, mistahs and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at the St. Ignatius Chapel in Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

Interment will be on December 28, 2003, 12 noon at the Libingan ng mga Bayani, Fort Bonifacio, Makati City.

Always caring...

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❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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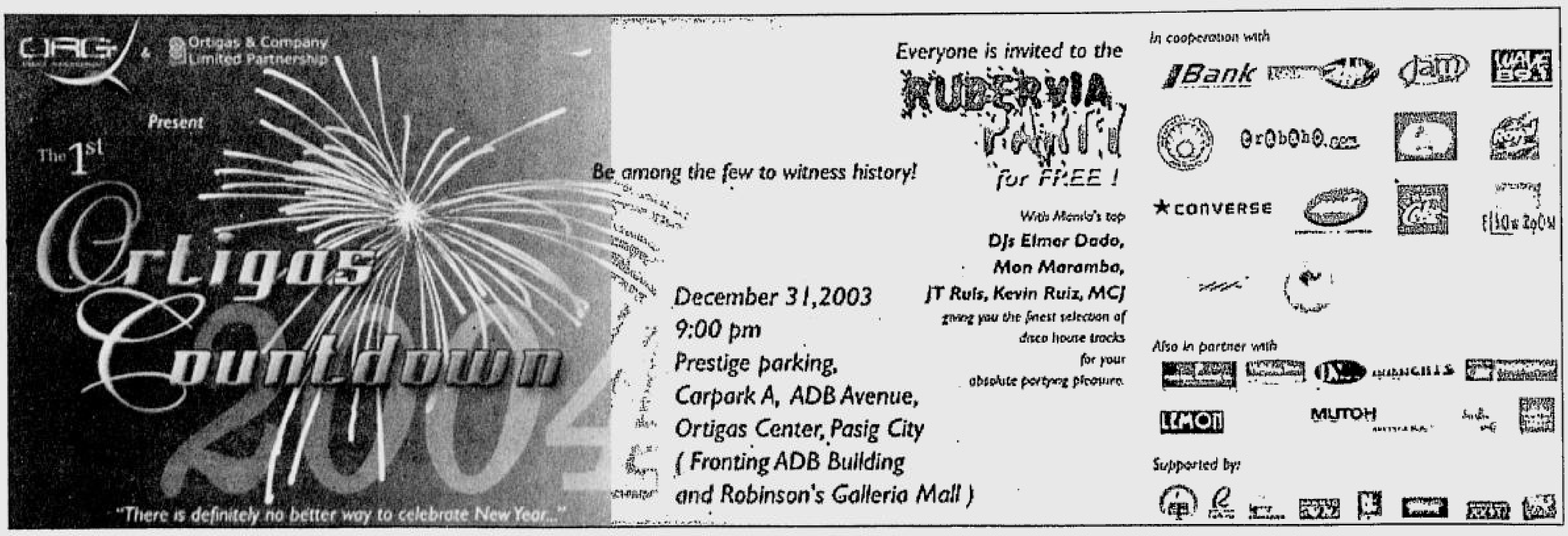

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Chrysler to come up with quieter minivans

By Charles E. Buban

CHRYSLER Group has invested $40 million (P2.222 billion) to make its already quiet minivan even quieter.

This was revealed early this month at the company's headquarters in Auburn Hills, Michigan, where the company's engineers further improved the refinement levels of the Chrysler and Dodge minivans to enhance the driving experience and communicate overall vehicle quality.

According to the company, one important measure of refining its minivans is in the area of noise, vibration and harshness.

Important factor

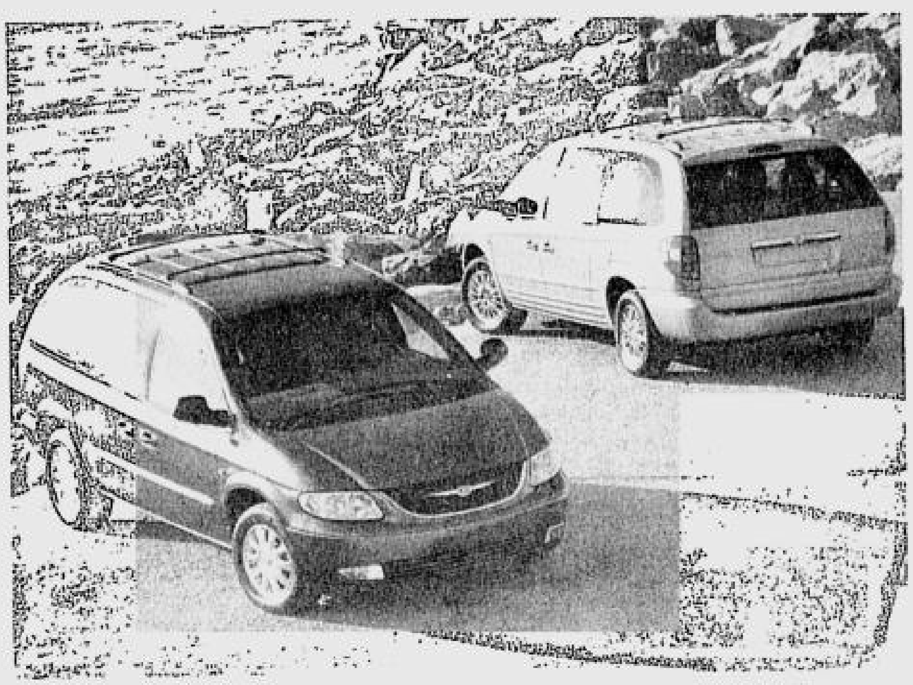
"Reducing noise, vibration and harshness is an important factor in a minivan since this type of vehicle caters more to families where communication and bonding is essential," explains Porti Vencer, national marketing director of Norkis Automotive Resources Corp., exclusive distributor of Chrysler Town & Country minivan here.

"Simply put, these forthcoming minivans will allow family members to talk to one another in a 'library-like' atmosphere without the outside noise or engine vibration bothering them," Vencer adds.

In fact, Chrysler engineers reported noise level measurements taken on 2004 and 2005 Chrysler and Dodge minivans prove that the new 2005 minivans are more than 16 percent quieter.

Simulation and vehicle tests

By combining computer simulation techniques with vehicle testing in the company's state-of-the-art Auburn Hills wind tunnel and on environmental four-post shakers, Chrysler Group engineers were able to create the quietest minivans in the market.



THE NEXT Chrysler minivan will bring interior comfort to a new level of refinement.

The following are some of the technologies that made the 2005 minivans even quieter:

- "Quiet steel" technology (visco-elastic treatment sandwiched between two steel layers), structural ribbing and spray-on dampener were integrated into the recessed floor design to reduce vibration, road noise and stone impingement.
- Robotically applied liquid spray dampener provides additional barriers to noise that would otherwise enter the passenger compartment through the roof or floor.
- Wind noise was reduced by incorporating triple door seals, molded gaskets, aerodynamically configured roof rack cross bows, and a spiraled antenna.
- Expandable polyurethane foam and baffles, UltraLight acoustic material, and molded silencers were applied to the structural and interior systems that perform as barriers, absorbers, and dissipaters against road- and powertrain-generated noises.
- New minivans built for market outside the United States, especially those with diesel engine, feature silencers in the engine and passenger compartment. The engine compartment consists of a thick underhood silencer, a decorative cover over the engine includes a liner of acoustic material, an acoustic "belly pan" that virtually covers the entire engine compartment, plenum treatments and fender silencers. The passenger compartment includes instrument panel silencers, an upgrade to the toe-pan dampers, and A-pillar silencers.

"Without question, the Chrysler minivan, which celebrate its 20th year in the market, is doing its best—and succeeding—in creating unparalleled vehicle environment for its occupants," says Vencer.

240 km per hour in a diesel

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

HAVE you ever dreamed of breaking the 200 km/h speed barrier in a car? If you have, then you're my soul mate. But I'll bet that you, like me, never dreamed that one can reach 240 km/h driving a diesel-fueled car.

Two hundred forty kilometers per hour was the top speed achieved by some motoring journalists on the traffic-free Star Tollway when they drove seven brand-new BMW 530d sedans from Manila to Lipa, Batangas on the invitation of BMW Group Philippines recently. It was truly a "discovery drive" and "driving adventure" as promised by BMW Philippines Corp. president Mark Gilbert, allowing us to appreciate not only the sheer driving pleasure of the athletic, elegant and supremely comfortable all-new 5 Series but also the refreshing Wellness Package of The Farm at San Benito, the Hippocrates Health Resort of Asia, where we stayed overnight.

Exhilarating

The wonder of it is that this exhilarating driving experience involved a diesel-fed car. Diesel motor vehicles have traditionally been associated with sluggishness, rattling noise, clatter and sooty exhaust emissions. The powerful 3.0-liter straight-six 218-bhp BMW 530d demolished all those bad diesel connotations. BMW's new direct-injection diesel engine featuring second generation common rail technology mated to a Steptronic six-speed automatic transmission has an unprecedented level of torque—369 lb-ft max—that quietly and smoothly delivers astounding acceleration. Capable of zooming from zero to 100 km/h in 7.1 seconds, the 530d's top speed is a very reachable 245 km/h.

I had no qualms about hitting 240 km/h in the 530d on the traffic-free Star Tollway since I knew that the BMW 5, like the 745i I drove two years ago in Italy, is equipped with Dynamic Stability Control (DSC). Moreover, the 530d has the world's first Active Steering, a variable steering transmission synchronized with the DSC system that electronically adds or subtracts from the driver's steering inputs at low or high road speeds to provide superior directional stability and improve handling in bends.

Agility

The 530d's Dynamic Drive active chassis, also derived from the 7 Series, varies the distribution of stabilization force on each wheel via hydraulic pressure to precisely adjust to every driving situation in split seconds. Dynamic Drive gives the 530d the agility of a sports car, offering its driver a heady combination of nimbleness and the smooth, comfortable ride of a luxury sedan, which the 530d ultimately is.

The quickness of the 530d is further enhanced by its lightweight aluminum/steel construction. The chassis and entire front section are made of aluminum. But while the latest 5 Series is lighter than its predecessor, which improves its fuel efficiency, it is larger and thus offers more passenger and cargo room. The leather seats are commodious bucket seats front and rear and the trunk can accommodate four golf bags.

ACTIVE ateering is placed in your hands when you grab the wheel of a BMW 530d.

Another outstanding feature introduced in the Seven that has been brought over to the Five is the iDrive operating system that is controlled by a rotary/push button mounted on the center console. In the 5 Series, iDrive has been simplified to a 4-way menu covering communication, climate, navigation and entertainment. The information is shown on the Central Display at the center of the dashboard that can be easily seen by the driver and front seat passenger. Controls important to driving are found on or around the three-spoke multifunction steering wheel. Despite all its high-tech gizmos, however, the BMW 530d does not have even one cupholder.

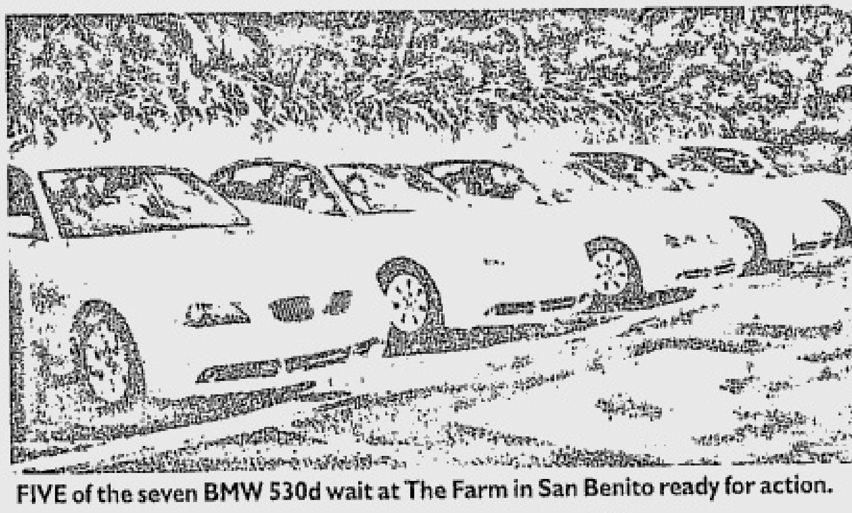
Bi-xenon

Since we drove during the daytime, we were unable to check out the BMW 530d's Adaptive Headlights, which swivel, depending on the direction of travel, to follow the precise course of the road. For those who regularly drive at night, Adaptive Headlights are important as they increase visibility by as much as 90 percent. Like head-up display, Adaptive Headlights are optional for the 5 Series. Bi-xenon headlights are the standard equipment.

With or without these options, however, the BMW 530d is a superb car fully deserving your passionate covetousness and its P4.25 million price tag. If you have that much cash to buy it, better hurry because it will cost 5 percent more in January.

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: "Criminal lawyer" is a redundancy.



FIVE of the seven BMW 530d wait at The Farm in San Benito ready for action.

Petron holds marine technical symposiums

PETRON Corp. recently conducted marine technical symposiums with the theme "Trends & Innovations in Marine, Shipping & Power Generation" in two separate locations—the New World Renaissance Hotel in Makati and the Marriott Hotel in Cebu City.

The symposiums updated Petron's customers on the latest innovations and technologies in the petroleum business.

Unwavering support

During the event, Petron president Khalid D. Al-Faddagh reaffirmed the company's unwavering support to provide world-class products and services to its customers.

"As your business partner, we ensure that you get not only high-class marine lubricants but also responsive and customized service to help you sustain and optimize your operations," Al-Faddagh said in his speech. "Likewise, we will continue to share with you emerging technologies in the industry to give you a sustained and strategic advantage."

David Adams, Infineum Marine technical manager and Winson Ang, Infineum Asia-Pacific product specialist, discussed trends in diesel engines and lubricants for marine, shipping and power generation applications. Petron Technical engineers Ramon Cruz and Alvin Christopher Becina talked about developments in Petromar XC, Petron's lubricant for new generation marine diesel engines.

Excellent performance

Some long-time users of Petromar XC gave their own testimonials on the excellent performance of the lubricant and the exceptional technical service provided by Petron.

"With the trend of deregulation in the power sector, it is essential to be more competitive," said Anthony Shibley, country manager of East Asia Power Resources Corp. "We are actually using Petromar XC 5540 and it has substantially improved the performance of our engines. One thing that really sets Petron apart is their reliable and consistent technical services."

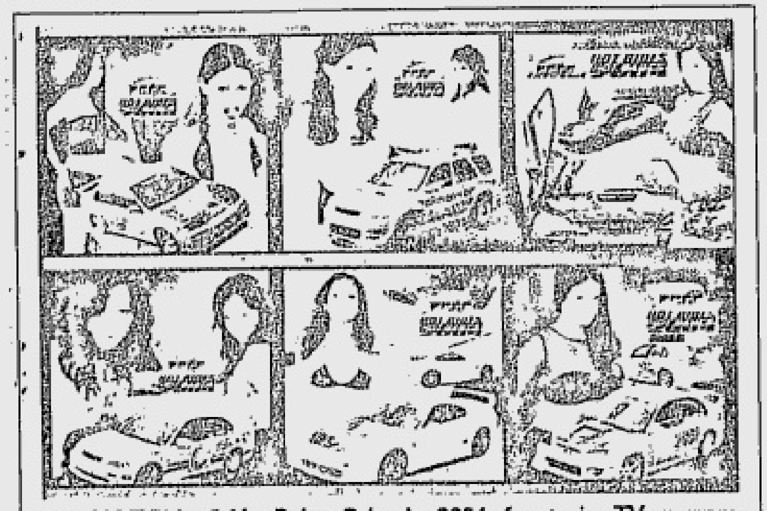
"We used to replace oil every 3,500-4,000 hours when we were using other products. After we switched to Petron, we have increased the life of the lube oil to 12,000 hours without sacrificing any quality," said Indophil Textile Mills Power Plant general manager Amitabh Basu.

Representatives of marine engine hardware and accessories also presented the latest technologies in their respective areas—Wärtsila Philippines on marine engine designs, Asea Brown Boveri (ABB) on turbochargers and Alpha Star Corp. on centrifuges.

Highest TBN rating

Petron's Petromar XC is the first marine engine oil developed with the highest TBN rating to address the depletion brought about by the very low lube oil consumption. TBN (total base number) is a measure of the oil's ability to counteract the acids produced in the engine.

Petromar XC is approved and endorsed by the world's most demanding original equipment manufacturers (OEM) such as Wärtsila, New Sulzer Diesel, and Deutz AG. It is also used extensively by other known engine brands like MAN B&W, Caterpillar, Daihatsu, Niigata, Pielstick, Mirrlees, Mitsubishi, Yanmar, and MAK, outperforming all other brands of marine lubricants currently being used in marine and land-based diesel engines.



THE HOT Rides & Hot Babes Calendar 2004 of motoring TV program "Auto Extreme" is now available (P250) in select bookstores, magazine shops, gas stations, bars and auto showrooms around Metro Manila. It comes with a special edition DVD containing models' photo shoots, "spec-pages" on the custom cars featured, plus a bonus video tracks of the recent Custom Car & Sport Truck Motorshow held in SM Megamall, and exclusive feature on concept cars and super cars from the 37th Tokyo Motor Show. Watch Auto Extreme every Sunday on Channel 9 (3:30 p.m.) to get special invites to the calendar's official launch on Jan. 9 (6 p.m.) at the Rockwell car park in the Power Plant Mall, Makati.

Win a roadster via MyGlobe

GLOBE now makes it possible to actually own a cool Mercedes-Benz SLK 230 roadster through MyGlobe downloads. This promo is open to all prepaid and postpaid Globe subscribers who avail of their favorite MyGlobe service contents weekly through the Download Station.

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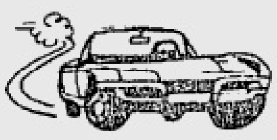
Each MyGlobe download earns them points that serve as promo entries. The sooner they register at the Download Station, the greater their chances of winning.

All downloads from 2346, like ring tones, MMS wallpaper and calendar logo, are also qualified to earn points for the promo. More points earned means greater chances of owning the Mercedes-Benz SLK 230 roadster at stake. Promo ends on Dec. 31.

The best of the season to you all

FULL TANK



Al Mendoza

MERRY Christmas!

The beauty, impact, of those words can only be beaten by the words, "I love you." But hearing them said to you today is already like hearing a loved one say to you, "I love you."

And a loved one does not only mean your sweetheart, your wife or husband, or your live-in partner, or companion for life. A loved one also means your family—father, mother, grandpa, grandma, son, daughter, in-law/s, adopted kid/s, grandchildren, even cousins, uncles, aunties, nephews and nieces.

Christmas, like grass, is in every household. Weed it out, either by design or otherwise, and you will be haunted for the rest of your life.

* * *

How many among you have acquired their dream cars this Christmas?

If you haven't, fret not. Fretting, I must say, is the highest form of worry. You fret all day, it won't change a thing. What has happened has happened. You can't undo what has been done. You worry all day, you might even get sick. Negative cells almost always set in when you either fret or worry.

That dream car will come if it should come at all. Even with the least of effort, any dream will materialize if it's destined to.

* * *

It's different if you try to target something. Targeting is different from dreaming.

You target to own a car, you do concrete things to achieve that. Like, working hard to save some pesos at the end of the day. Doing overtime is one thing. Getting yourself a sideline is another.

You dream to own a car, you seldom engage in concrete action. You mostly sit all day, gazing at the sky, waiting for the stars to fall and then make that wish: Bag that dream car this Christmas. God helps those who help themselves. You are not helping yourself at all if you just dream.

* * *

Even as Toyota topped vehicle sales anew in November, I heard that Isuzu's new baby, the D-Max, is going great guns once more. I am not surprised. Isuzu, the world's leader in diesel engine, has always been a consistent chart topper. Again, take a bow my dear Myrna. If you haven't gotten yet your much-deserved bonus, I promise to chase Art B to the showers. (Joke only, of course.) Knowing Isuzu's big moguls, incentives should always come in handy. *O, di ba?*

But to get back to Toyota. Listen to Fujio Cho, the Toyota Motor Corp. president, on the emerging trends in the automotive industry which was a topic I had baited him to discourse on during the recent Tokyo Motor Show: "Globally, competition among companies is becoming increasingly fierce. Anticipating future growth, auto manufacturers are competing fiercely to establish operating platforms in Southeast Asia and China."

China, with its 1.2 billion people, remains the sleeping giant in the world auto market. Mr. Cho said China will soon "be Toyota's main target in the next five years or so." With that as a warning, Asia's No. 1 carmaker may yet attain its goal of being No. 1 in the world by 2010.

* * *

As always, the most traveled roads this season are Edsa, and both the Southern and Northern Luzon Expressways. The reason is obvious: They are main arteries to favorite destinations in populous Luzon.

I will hit all three again this Christmas. Edsa, of course, has been almost a daily beat. To Pangasinan, the land of my birth, I go first after the birthday today of Jesus Christ; that means I'll again pass by the North Diversion Road. Before the year ends, on to Quezon (Calauag), the birth place of Sol F. Juvida whose best friend the last 32 years is none other than yours truly. If anyone my age can top that, I'll sponsor a Mass. An evening kambing party follows next at No. 11 General Luna St., Mangatarem, Pangasinan. But to the visitors should the *salu-salo* materializes, please avoid criticizing the ongoing construction at Northern Luzon Expressway on your way to my province. It's been almost 11 months since work began there in February and I tell you, the suffering will soon be worth it.

Just be patient a little more as the rehabilitation and expansion will soon be a reality. As the saying goes, *kung walang hirap, walang ginhawa*. From the average travel time of 3-1/2 hours from Manila to my birthplace via Carlos P. Romulo's hometown of Camiling, Tarlac, the trip will soon be cut by almost an hour.

My, I can't wait to see the 84-km project finished. Going country has always been an undying love for this country-bred boy. I will never trade the trees of my youth for the city's skyscrapers, the rippling brooks for the screaming blokes in the asphalt jungle, the mountain view for the view of heaps of city garbage.

Ah, to sew rhyme is to sow grime in reverse. The grime of a different kind only the pure of heart can hark on and on and on.

* * *

QUOTE ME. What is Christmas if you can't even budge an inch to give way to a fellow motorist wishing to go ahead of you?

E-mail: pr_motoring@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Cesar D. Mangawang

STRONG powerful lines that go with the X-type's performance

The sting of the Jaguar

By Tessa R. Salazar

WE all know that the jaguar of the cat family snarls and bites. But never have we realized that the Jaguar on wheels can "sting" and "fly," even.

The new XJ series of the Jaguar could render all the other "creatures" in the urban jungle paralyzed and powerless, because, to tell the truth, this feline has the constitution of flight.

The story is that the Jaguar XJ series is made of light alloy borrowed from aerospace technologies, effectively making this car up to 40 percent lighter and 60 percent stiffer than previous steel-bodied models. You can imagine, thus, the improved performance in handling and fuel economy. The supercharged 4.2-liter XJR reportedly punches from 0 to 60 mph (96 kph) in 5 seconds flat, just four tenths of a second slower than the Ferrari 360 Modena.

So, we now know that a Jaguar can "fly" but still keep its wheels on the ground. But where's the "sting" there? Enter international rock legend singer Sting.

Who doesn't like this unassuming but powerful artist? It was he who sang "Desert Rose," and it was this song that helped the Jaguar S-Type get etched into the minds of us cable TV babies. Sting riding in a Jaguar, Sting falling asleep in the backseat, the Jaguar gliding across the screen, "Desert Rose" playing, Sting's voice singing "I dream of rain…I dream of fire…" And they both looked ooh so good in each other's arms—the Jaguar and Sting were.

This song was playing in my mind when I was waiting for a "date" with a Jaguar in the early morning of Dec. 12. I was expecting the top-of-the-line XJR to sweep me off my feet, sort of.

Four eyes

A few minutes later, two Jaguars, with their classic "four-eyed" headlights, were staring at me, but the pouncing "leapers" (the shiny jaguar statue-emblems on the hood) were noticeably absent.

The first Jaguar was a 2-liter, front-wheel-drive S-type. The second was also an S-type, though the engine was bigger at 2.5 L, and it boasted a four-wheel drivetrain. Though it was a bit of a letdown that they weren't the ultra high-tech XJRs, these two specimens were still a sight to behold.

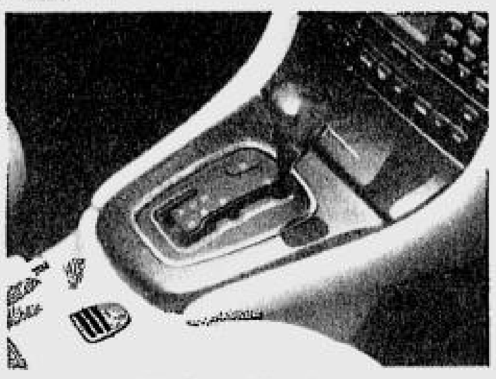
The first question I had to ask one of the Jaguar drivers, who happened to be Jaguar Cars Philippines Inc. marketing director Carlo Nakpil was, do his customers ever get bored of the four-eyed look?

Carlo said that for Jaguar makers, this had been one of the many conflicts they constantly had to contend with during the designing stages of new models. Though the designers didn't want to alienate the traditional market (customers who never seemed to get tired of the four-eyed look), their younger buyers have different tastes, and some Jaguar concept cars have indeed been a little bit more daring in design with specific variations in the headlights. Thus, even the XJ series had sometimes been criticized for being too conservative.

Pouncing leapers

Next question: where were the pouncing "leapers?" Carlo replied the statues were made optional for litigation purposes. He explained that those statues could pounce on its hapless victims in accidents, and the injured would actually sue Jaguar for keeping an "unruly" pet.

He explained further that many younger buyers felt the leaper ruined the Jaguar's lines. The small "growler" badge located at the grille, known as the Jaguar insignia, felt more "integrated" into the overall design. Or it may be an artistic excuse to skirt the additional P20,000 to plant that pouncing leaper on the hood. What a pricey kitty.



THE DISTINCT J line shiftpoints

Though Sting wouldn't be able to accompany me on my date, it didn't matter. I didn't even mind if I looked like Carlo's driver. And though I was initially disappointed the space-age technology of the XJR hadn't yet trickled down to this X level, it didn't really matter later on. All that mattered, this time, was that I was able to drive a Jaguar on the highways of Manila and in Tagaytay.

And maybe, for those who dream of owning their own Jaguars, all that matters is that the price of bragging rights is going down—from P4 million, the cheapest Jaguar now goes for P2.2 million—and the exclusivity quality doesn't diminish because the price may have gone down but the numbers in production remain the same. Only about 140,000 Jaguars are made worldwide annually. Jaguar makers are keeping their animals endangered, indeed.

> The exclusivity quality doesn't diminish because the price may have gone down but the numbers in production remain the same. Jaguar makers are keeping their animals endangered, indeed

From Manila to Tagaytay, I drove the entry-level Jaguar X type 2-liter. From Tagaytay back to Manila, I would then be behind the wheel of stronger sister all-wheel-drive 2.5-liter. With Carlo as my front passenger, PR lady Jingjing Romero at the back and Jennifer Dahonog of Sony Ericsson as our "professional" backseat passengers, we set out for Tagaytay around 7:30 a.m. The 2.5-L Jaguar behind us looked ready to leap anytime a BMW or a Mercedes-Benz tried to approach us.

The X-type is the direct competitor of both the BMW 3-series and the Mercedes-Benz C-class. In size, however, the X-type is actually an inch or two shorter than the old BMW 5 series.

Big push in sales

This entry level X-type also gave Jaguar Cars Philippines the big push in sales. From just 45 to 50 units sold in 2000, Jaguar sales shot up to 94 units in 2001 to 130 in 2002. This year, Jaguar is expecting 150 units or more.

The first noticeable aspect when I entered the X-type was the wood trimming, which could have fooled even the most discriminating termites. But I found out later that Jaguar substrates are made of aluminum (most substrates are plastic now) but the sheets of wood they applied all came from a real maple tree and from the same one, at that. They were actually matched.

Jaguar maintains a building in its head Coventry plant made just to do the trimmings. All interiors are done in-house.

The instrumentation panel, like fine wine, maintains that classic look, and would look more expensive as it ages. The cubbyhole in between the passenger and the driver is small, just enough for compact discs. The ticking of the directional gauges sounds like the tick-tick-tick of a time bomb, though.

The Jaguar that I was driving had cloth seats. The new model launched, the 2004 X-type custom, uses leather as standard already, and it would be so on every Jaguar bought. All X-types come with 17-inch tires.

The side-view mirrors, though oval, are nice and wide. Surprisingly, the view at the back is still expansive even if pillars are massive.

The independent suspension generates that "floating" feeling. It was no wonder, then, that my backseat passengers dozed off. In comparison, the BMW 318 M sport, as I recalled when I drove it to Baguio a few years ago, proved a harsher ride, especially on harsh roads.

The X-type looked bulky, but when I drove it through the winding routes in Tagaytay, the car proved nimble on its feet, er, wheels.

Even on steep climbs, the Jaguar's engine was powerful enough just to keep it on "D." The steering was responsive. And though the Jaguar's appearance doesn't tempt you to test the limits of its speed, the makers made a big deal of creating a very inviting driving environment.

The suspension is taut, probably because of the 17-inch-wheel package. The 2.5-L variant, though, had 16s, and had a "softer" ride than the 2-liter.

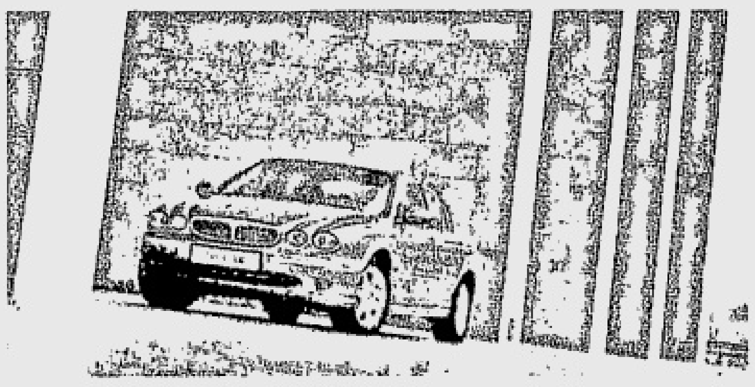
Perfect match

Jingjing had earlier lent me a Sony Ericsson P900, probably because she sensed that I would be in the company of Jaguars and I needed an "amulet" to protect myself from such snarling beasts. Kidding aside, JingJing said the P900 was the "perfect" match for the Jaguar, as the two completed the look of the ultra-high society Jaguar driver. As we negotiated our way through the pre-Christmas traffic, I "test drove" the P900, recording conversations and taking our photos. I sent them to my editor's cell phone (to prove that I was working), and I even e-mailed documents to myself, and received them. The P900 doubles as a PDA (personal digital assistant) and an MP3 player.

Maybe Sting would like to model this phone, too.

The X-type is well insulated for those quiet conversations, and to make it easy to fall asleep for the passengers—ask Sting. It won't be your fastest car, we're certain, but it sure will make a nice centerpiece.

Verdict: Jaguar's volume targets are modest, and it intends to keep it that way. You will never see as many Jaguars as BMWs, the trade-off for the latter being BMWs aren't that much of a head-turner anymore. When you get to own a Jaguar, you can be assured that only 139,999 more own the same thing. Exclusivity breeds contentedness, they say, and a contented, comfortable cat keeps on purring, or sleeping, depending on where in the Jaguar it may sit.



THE FELINE with its classic 'four-eyed' headlights

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Isuzu beefs up drive promoting diesel engine

By Charles E. Buban

DIESEL engines power most of the nation's trucks, buses, trains, ships and off-road machines like generators, farm and home equipment.

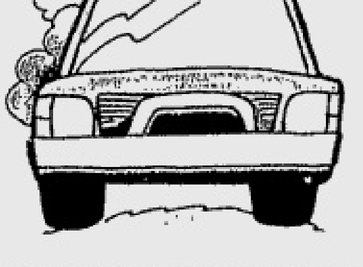
In business, this type of engine is popular among light and medium duty truck users because they are more economical to maintain in the long term and capable of posting more kilometers before needing a major work compared to gasoline-powered vehicles.

Much more, a diesel engine can make more power with less fuel than a gasoline engine.

"It is in diesel technology that the name Isuzu became a household name," says Myrna Gonzales, Isuzu Philippines senior manager for corporate affairs.

First Di diesel engine

In fact, the leading diesel engine maker and pioneer in diesel technology was the one who introduced the world's first direct-injection (Di) diesel engine for light-duty trucks in 1984.



This is a breakthrough since the Di diesel engine—which spits the fuel directly into the combustion chamber—offers extremely high-energy efficiency: the latest generation improves fuel efficiency by 20 percent over the already thrifty small diesels now prevalent in Europe.

"If you need to squeeze more power from the engines with less diesel, use the Di technology," Gonzales explains.

Fuel efficiency is fast becoming an issue nowadays since the price of fuel, whether diesel or gasoline, is still going up.

Di Diesel Up! campaign

Last October, Isuzu Philippines launched its Di Diesel Up! campaign in partnership with oil firm Total Philippines.

"The campaign involves a series of activities to reinforce the superiority of Isuzu's Di diesel engine, such as the kilometer log face-off contest (highest registered kilometer reading), stick-on gig, trivia and driving clinic," reveals Gonzales.

An Isuzu Hi-Lander owned by Teresita Ozzard (Isuzu Batangas entry) submitted the farthest log with 330,252 km.

This was followed by a Fuego owned by Roger Meres (Isuzu Bulacan entry) with 320,338 km and an N-Series Truck owned by Okabe Nikoh Co. (Isuzu Cavite entry) with 308,406 km.

In the Trooper category, Ruel Villafria (Isuzu Manila entry) logged on the farthest with 163,197 km.

P20,000 cash prize

Winners of the contest (for each vehicle category) received P20,000 cash prize and premium items from Isuzu Philippines.

Remedios Cusi (Isuzu Commonwealth entry), on the other hand, won the trivia contest and bagged the P10,000 cash prize.

A seminar-test drive was also held in selected universities and companies for public awareness on the advantages of diesel.

The seminar was conducted to educate participants on the power, efficiency, safety and durability of diesel engine.

Service training experts from Isuzu Philippines supervised the seminars and test drive.

LIFESTYLE
For feedback, text us at (0919) 880-3354 or (0916) 200-1160 or e-mail us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

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ANG PASKO NATIN CONTEST WINNERS

Best homemade Christmas traditions

'Tis one season made memorable by old and new family rituals

HOW do Filipinos celebrate Christmas? At one meeting to brainstorm on stories we could run in this section for the merry season, we got to talking about what we did every Christmas.

One writer said they sang carols after the Noche Buena. Her Dad would play the piano and their musically gifted family would sing song after song until dawn.

Another said on Christmas morning his mom was always given the honors of being the first to open gifts. Small compensation, really, for a widow's grief. She wasn't quite 40 when her husband died and left her with eight children. Alas, her own passing away in 1999 put an end to traditions in their family.

The youngest reporter said her *lola* cooked certain dishes—Chicken Gallantina, Russian Salad and, the biggest deal, Potaje—only on Christmas. That way, they had something to look forward to on Christmas. Grandmother also distributes *queso de bola* and ham to less fortunate neighbors every year.

Another writer said his father would lead the family in a thanksgiving prayer before Noche Buena every year. Someone else said they would have fireworks after Noche Buena because his dad liked fireworks.

All this talk got us wondering about our readers and their own Christmas traditions. And so the contest.

From the entries, it was easy to see that the most common traditions revolve around faith and food.

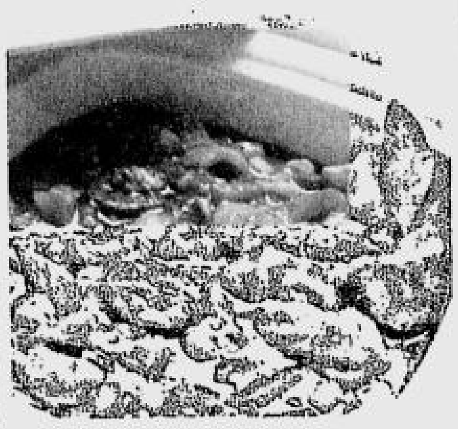
Before and after going to church, Filipinos love to eat, but never more so than at Christmastime, and always with the *tropa* of parents, siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles, grandparents—the whole kit and caboodle of genes and heirloom dishes.

It is heartwarming to learn that Filipinos are keeping family Christmas traditions alive and inventing new ones for the generations to come. Our thanks to our hundreds of readers who took the time to tell us about their traditions by e-mail, fax, snail-mail or hand delivery.

Check out the winning entries in Section F of today's issue.

Merry Christmas from all of us in Lifestyle!

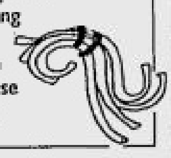
In this issue



Step by step Callos /C2

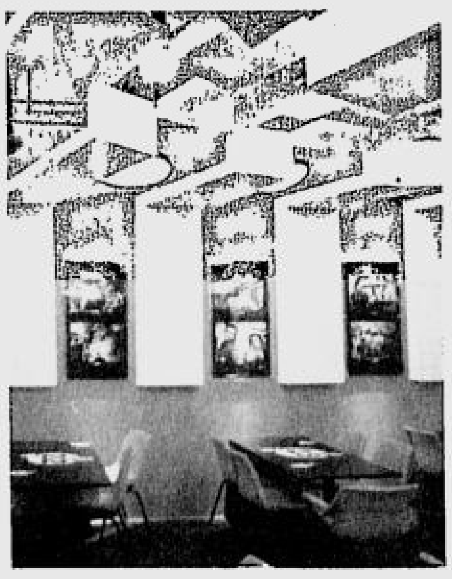
Dinn

Clear soup with squid balls and vegetables
Fried bihon with vegetable chopsuey topping
Pearl balls
Steamed fish with mayonnaise
Mango sago

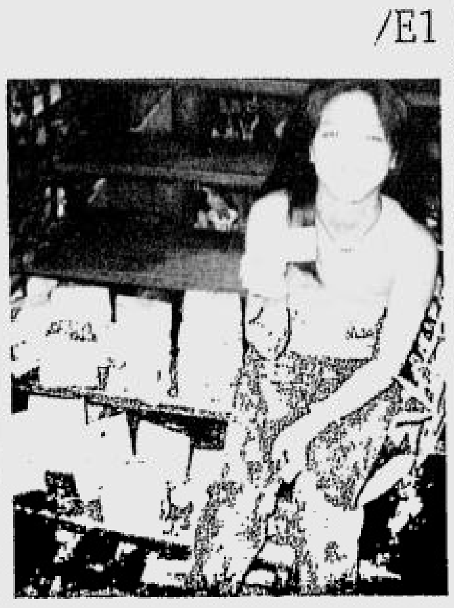


Media Noche fare from Dorothy Ferreria /C2

Holiday buffet /D1



Café Bola: A review /E1



Winning traditions /SECTION F

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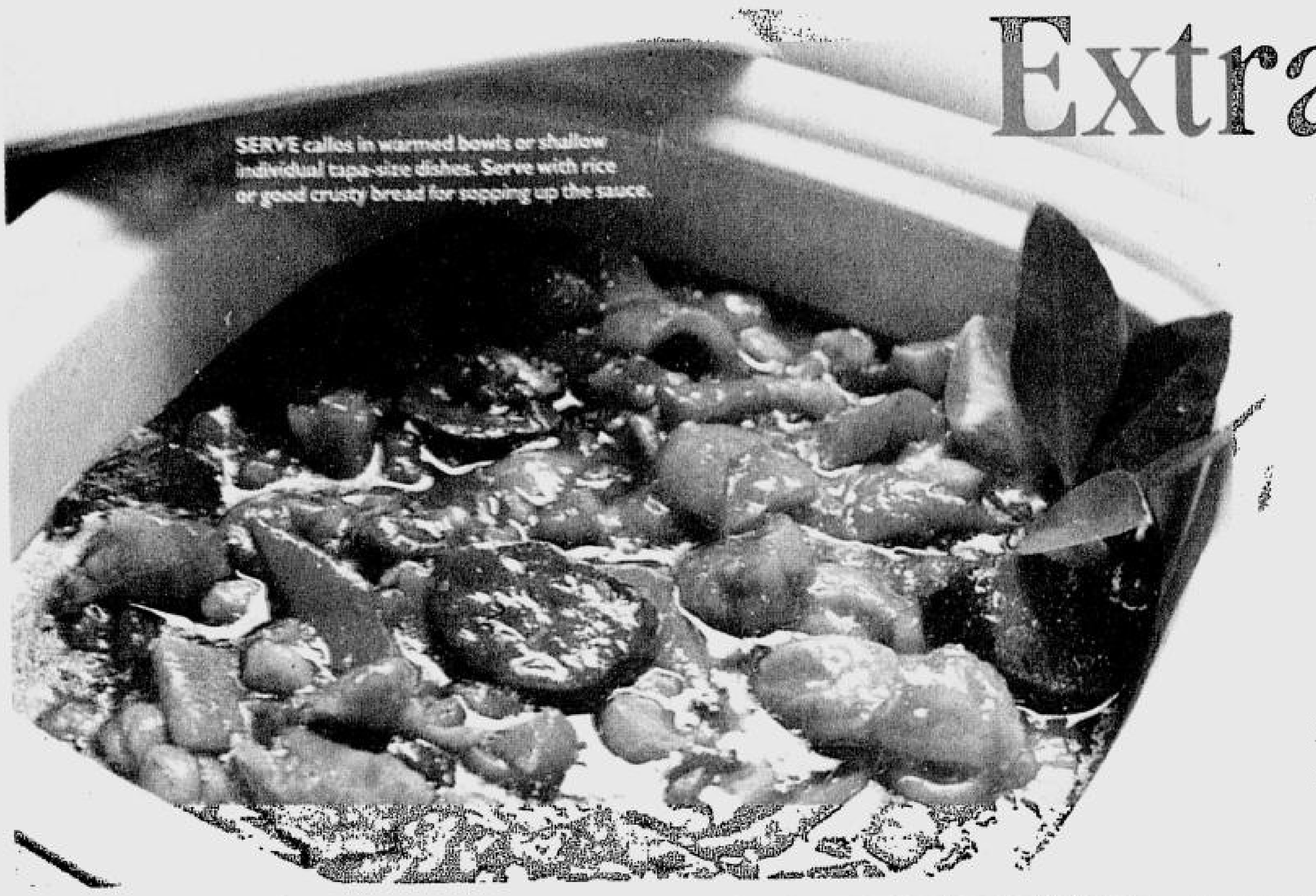
Extra-creamy

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Roger Carpio


SERVE callos in warmed bowls or shallow individual tapa-size dishes. Serve with rice or good crusty bread for sopping up the sauce.

OX TRIPE usually requires long, slow cooking, and that is the secret of extremely tasty, thick and tender callos.

This quintessential Spanish dish uses a combination of ox tripe and ox feet, boiled together in water for two hours or more to ensure a delicate, easily chewed meat.

The gentle cooking also makes for a thick, sticky broth, which actually keeps very well for days in the refrigerator.

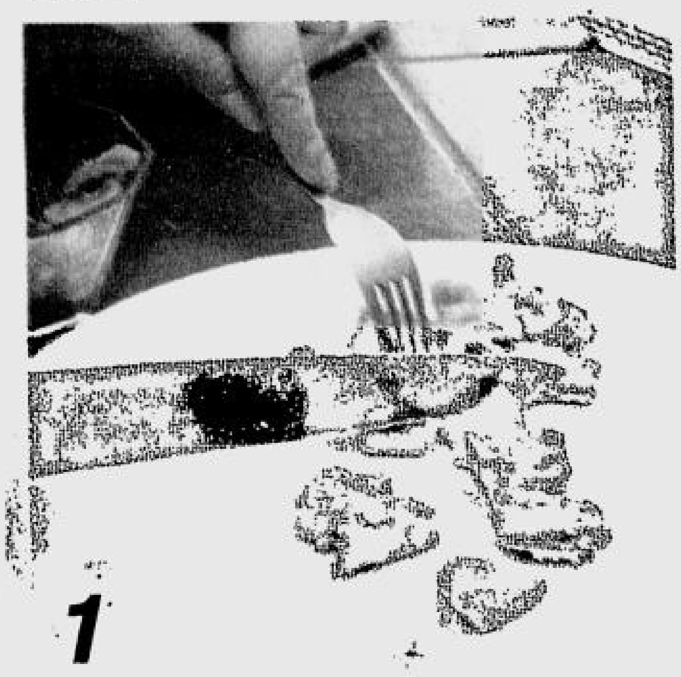
It is important to rinse the tripe well. Place in a rather large kettle and add cold water to cover. Bring to a boil, then drain immediately. Cut the tripe into pieces and return to the empty kettle.

Some cooks use tomato sauce for callos, but homemaker Faye Zorri uses tomato paste to create a ri tent, creamy-goodness callos.

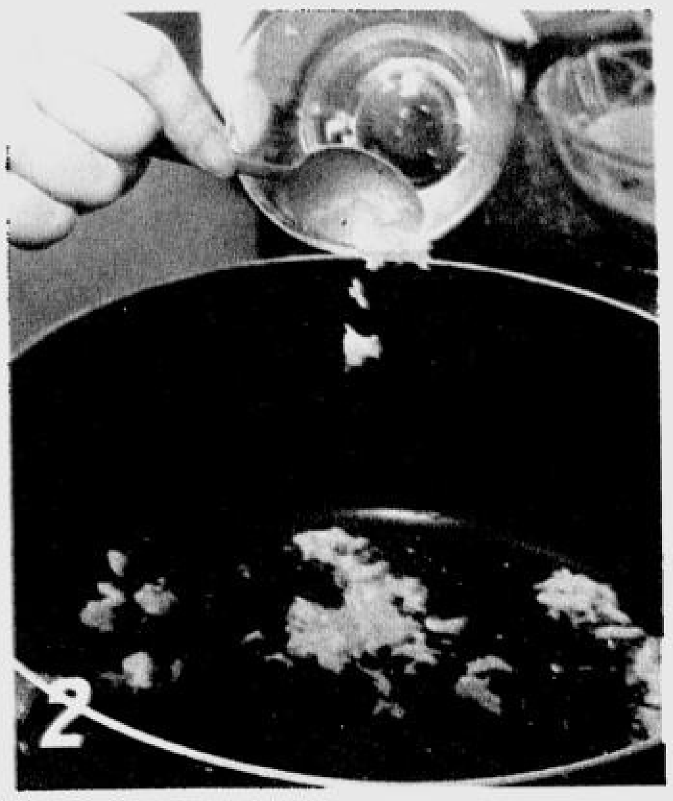
Tañada lea cook authentic callos from he in-law, who al callos with tomato paste. Ta to own a catering service, bu it up to concentrate on sellin tled pasta sauces, salad

> Use tomato pas
> to give a rich,
> consistent,
> melt-in-your-m
> goodness
> to this dish

STEP BY STEP


1

THOROUGHLY clean ox tripe and ox feet. Mix them together and boil in 4 c of water (just right to cover the meat) over low fire for 2 ½ hours. After boiling, separate broth from the meat. Save the broth. Cool meat and cut into 2" squares or rectangles.


2

IN A LARGE casserole, put oil and sauté garlic (don't brown it).

3

ADD tomato paste. Let it simmer over low fire for five minutes. Mix in the broth and chopped ox tripe.

4

ADD the cubed ox feet.

Media noche fare for good luck in 2004

By Dorothy MJ Ferreria
Contributor

AFTER today's Christmas dinner, we now have to prepare for New Year's Eve. Following tradition, we must fill the dining table with round fruits, sticky *kakanin* and *arroz caldo* to attract better fortune in the coming year.

Here we have pearl balls (a glamorized *siomai*), *pichi pichi* and *cuchinta*. These may not necessarily go together but these will surely help bring good fortune.

Equally important, so the old folks say, avoid chicken on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day so your life doesn't end up like that of a chicken—*"isang kahig, isang tuka."*

> Tradition says we must fill our table with food in round shapes and sticky 'kakanin.' So here are recipes for pearl balls, 'pichi pichi' and 'cuchinta'

Pearl Balls

¼ kg raw short grain glutinous rice (*malagkit na bilog*)
6 pcs dried Shiitake mushrooms
½ kg ground pork
1/3 c chopped spring onions
½ tsp finely grated ginger
1 tsp finely chopped garlic
1 tbsp fine salt
ground white pepper to taste
1 whole egg
½ c finely chopped *singkamas* or canned water chestnuts

Dipping sauce:
2 tbsp soy sauce mixed with the juice of 1 *calamansi*

Wash the rice well until the water runs clear. Transfer to a bowl and add enough water to cover. Let soak for two hours. Drain.

Wash the mushrooms in water and soak for at least 15 minutes to soften. Wash again to remove traces of dirt. Discard the stem and chop the mushroom caps.

Transfer the minced mushrooms to a mixing bowl. Add the remaining ingredients and mix well. Shape the mixture into 1-inch balls. Roll in rice covering the pork ball completely. Arrange in a steamer leaving an inch of space between balls to allow for expansion. Steam over medium high heat for 30 minutes or until the rice is done. Serve with the prepared dipping sauce.

Pichi-pichi

1 ½ c grated cassava (*kamoteng kahoy*)
1 c water
1 c white sugar
½ tsp *lihiya**
freshly grated coconut

In a mixing bowl combine the cassava, water, sugar and *lihiya*. Pour the mixture into mini muffin pans (1 ounce capacity), filling each molder to the brim. Steam for at least 20 minutes or until solid but still soft and transparent. Immediately unmold and roll in grated coconut.

Note: If desired, process *pichi-pichi* mixture in a blender for a finer texture.

Cuchinta

1 c sifted all-purpose flour
1 c dark brown sugar
2 c water
1 tsp *lihiya**

Process the ingredients for the *cuchinta* in a blender until smooth. Pour mixture into mini muffin tins two-thirds full. Steam for 20 minutes or until solid. Let cool for a few minutes in the molders to maintain a good shape. Unmold and serve with grated coconut.

Lihiya or lye water can be purchased in wet market stalls that sell freshly made *galapong* and raw *ube*. In other countries, it can be purchased in oriental stores as lye water.

Dorothy MJ Ferreria offers cooking, baking and cake decorating lessons at Dorothy's Cooking School in Quezon City. Call 7217735 or e-mail dorothyferreria @skyinet.net

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
MONDAY	Hotcake with butter and maple syrup Pan-grilled ham Coffee/hot chocolate/iced tea Papaya with *calamansi*	Chicken *tinola* with green papaya and *malunggay* leaves Rice Chilled chico wedges with canned cream and cornflakes	Pork *adobo* with canned pineapple chunks *Gisadong sitaw* Rice Fruit gelatin
TUESDAY	Chicken tocino Fried eggs Garlic rice Coffee/hot chocolate/fruit juice	Russian salad Fried fish fillet with garlic mayonnaise Rice Banana split	Clear soup with chopped spring onion and fried garlic topping *Sotanghon guisado* *Lumpiang ubod* Fresh fruit platter
WEDNESDAY	Cereal and milk *Pan de sal* Assorted fruit jam Butter and cheese Coffee/hot chocolate/iced tea Chilled melon wedges with *calamansi*	Tossed greens with thousand island dressing Pot roast Mashed potatoes Apple pie a la mode	Clear soup with squid balls and vegetables Fried *bihon* with vegetable chopsuey topping Pearl balls Steamed fish with mayonnaise Mango sago
THURSDAY	*Pichi-pichi* *Cuchinta* Store-bought *puto* Cheese platter Pan grilled ham Coffee, hot chocolate or ginger brew (*salabat*)	*Cream of mushroom soup* Seafood paella Pork barbecue Brazo de Mercedes	Salad bar Beef *caldereta* Grilled fish steaks Pandan rice Halo halo bar
FRIDAY	Omelet with ham and bell pepper Pan *americano* Coffee, hot chocolate or iced tea Ripe mangoes with cottage cheese or yogurt	Steamed chicken with black mushrooms and Chinese sausage Garlic *kangkong* Rice Almond jelly	*Misua* soup Leftover special – fried rice or *pancit* Fresh fruit platter
SATURDAY	*Tinapang bangus* Salted eggs and tomatoes Garlic rice Coffee, hot chocolate or fruit juice Fresh fruit platter	*Tahong or halaan* soup Fried pork chop Rice Fruit salad	Chicken *afritada* with potatoes and bell pepper Rice Sweetened *nata de coco*
SUNDAY	*Mamon or ensaymada* Vienna sausage Cheese platter Coffee, hot chocolate or iced tea Fresh fruit platter	*Inihaw na liempo* *Inihaw na tilapia* Salted egg and tomato salad Rice *Gulaman at sago*	*Miso* soup Fish and vegetable tempura Rice Green tea ice cream

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Recipes in a

THE SAN Miguel Purefoods Culinary Center host recently In the Holiday Mood, a cooking and baki demonstration at the San Miguel Corp. Cafeter with two well-known culinary experts, Reggie Asp ras and Chef Joey Prats.

Using Magnolia Gold Butter, Magnolia Crea Cheese, Dari Crème Classic, Magnolia Queso de B la, Monterey Meats, Magnolia Chicken, Purefoo Corned Beef and Purefoods Fiesta Ham, here a recipes that will make any dinner table festive.

For more recipes, visit www.mygreatfood.com send a self-addressed stamped envelope to S Miguel Pure Foods Culinary Center, Legazpi cor. H gle Sts., Barangay Ugong, Pasig, 1604.

Sweet and Sour Taro Chicken

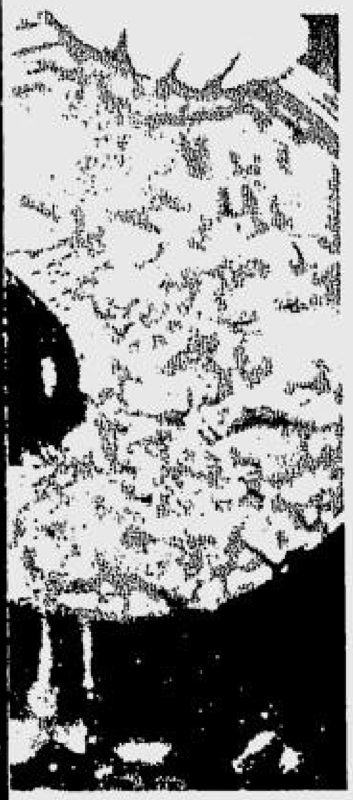
By Reggie Aspiras

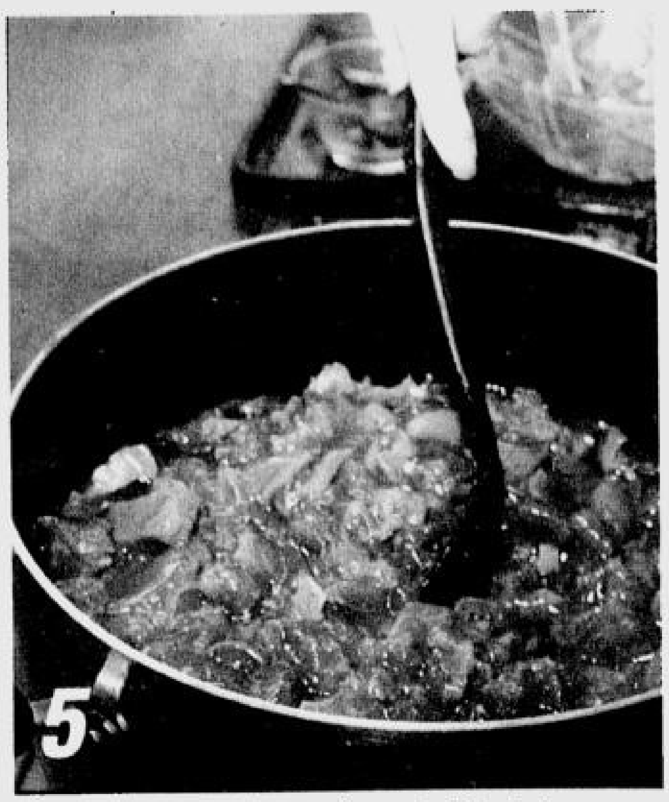
1 kg taro, boiled and mashed
150 g sweet ham, julienned
¼ c shortening
2 tsp salt
1 tsp pepper
1 c leeks, sliced, green and white parts
¼ c water
¼ c cornstarch
2 Magnolia chicken breasts
½ tsp salt
½ tsp pepper
taro mixture

SWEET and Sou Taro Chicken

OATMEAL Peanut Butter Bars

BEST COPY AVAILABLE





STIR well. Cover and leave to simmer for 30 minutes.

ADD salt and pepper to taste. Add chorizo and chickpeas.

ADD red bell pepper. Continue to simmer for 10 minutes.

callos

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cookies, cakes, spreads and gourmet dishes like callos (tels. 6603891 and 0917-6299649).

Her callos dish isn't too rich or heavy on the stomach, but it still manages to maintain its traditional flavor and texture. The tomato paste is simmered for hours with olive oil, tripe, *pata* and chorizo. Others add garbanzos, strips of juicy bacon, ham, spices and wine.

Serve callos with rice or with good, crusty dipping bread drizzled with olive oil. This recipe yields 12.

Ingredients

½ kg ox tripe
1.5-1.8 kg ox feet (beef *pata*),
3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
6 cloves garlic, crushed
1 can tomato paste
3 pcs chorizo de bilbao, sliced
3 pcs red bell pepper, roasted and cut into 2-inch square
1 can chickpeas, drained and peeled
salt and pepper to taste

For suggestions, e-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph

oliday mood

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cornstarch
hot oil
Relish:
2 tbsp extra virgin oil
½ c chopped onion
½ c cubed carrots
julienned ginger
¼ c chopped garlic
juice of 1 orange
zest of 1 orange
juice of 1 lemon
zest of 1 lemon
1 ½-2 c pineapple tidbits (drained)
1 c diced ripe mangoes
salt and pepper
sugar

In a bowl, combine 1 kg boiled and mashed taro, 150 g julienned sweet ham, ¼ c shortening, 2 tsp salt, 1 tsp pepper and 1 c sliced green and white parts of leeks (combined). Macerate by hands then add ¼ c cornstarch. Mix until well blended.

Slice the chicken breasts into two, making four pieces. Slit a little and season with ½ tsp salt and ½ tsp pepper. Coat one side of the chicken pieces with a layer of taro mixture (use cornstarch on hands to prevent sticking). Coat both top and bottom sides of the prepared chicken with a thin layer of cornstarch. Deep fry in hot oil taro side first. Fry only a couple at a time. Drain on paper towel. (Keep in oven to maintain temperature).

Relish. Heat up casserole. Put in 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, ½ c chopped onions, ½ c chopped carrots, few pieces of julienned ginger and ½ c chopped garlic. Cook for a while. Remove from pan. Set aside and cool. Then add-zest of 1 orange, juice of 1 orange, zest of 1 lemon, juice of 1 lemon, 1 ½-2 cups pineapple tidbits (drained), 1 c diced mangoes (ripe). Season with salt, pepper and sugar to taste.

Oatmeal Peanut Butter Bars

By Chef Joey Prats

Yield: 32 cookies
1 c peanut butter
½ c brown sugar
½ c light corn syrup
½ c Magnolia Gold Butter, unsalted
2 tsp vanilla extract
3 cs quick-cooking oatmeal
½ c desiccated coconut
½ c toasted almonds, chopped
½ c raisins
½ c semi-sweet chocolate chips
For decoration:
100 g semi-sweet chocolate, melted

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease a 13-inch by 9-inch pan. Combine peanut butter, brown sugar, light corn syrup, unsalted butter, and vanilla extract in a mixer bowl. Using the paddle attachment, beat mixture on medium speed until smooth. Add all the other ingredients. Mix well.

Press the mixture into prepared pan. Bake in preheated oven for 25 minutes. Cool in pan on wire rack. Cut into bars.

Decoration: Drizzle melted semi-sweet chocolate over bars. Allow to set.

NESCAFÉ
HAKOT PAMASKO

Mainit na pagbati sa mga nagwagi!!!

2nd Monthly Draw winners: 9 na nagwagi ng P100,000 worth of NESTLÉ Products: GMA Erwin S. Galay Makati City NORTH LUZON Vivian P. Dela Pena Pangasinan CENTRAL LUZON Erlinda P. Catacutan Angeles City SOUTH LUZON 1 Maridel M. Longakit Calamba City SOUTH LUZON 2 Dionisia M. Salvacion San Pablo City, Laguna EAST VISAYAS Doree Mayol Cebu City NORTH MINDANAO Reynaldo B. Estogio Cagayan de Oro City SOUTH MINDANAO Evangeline Cesio Davao City

9 na nagwagi ng P50,000 worth of NESTLÉ Products: GMA Teresita Alviar NORTH LUZON Myrna G. Estrada CENTRAL LUZON Rolando M. Lopez SOUTH LUZON 1 Amleto R. Delgado SOUTH LUZON 2 Herlin A. Trilles EAST VISAYAS Ma. Fe C. Tacloban NORTH MINDANAO Rose Delia Bertulfo WEST VISAYAS Mariano Omandam SOUTH MINDANAO Carmencita S. Sudaria

9 na nagwagi P25,000 worth of NESTLÉ Products: GMA Perlita F. Maglaque NORTH LUZON Rosario E. Hermosura CENTRAL LUZON Juana T. Reyes SOUTH LUZON 1 Elidia B. Erasga SOUTH LUZON 2 Francisco B. Parica EAST VISAYAS Maria Leonora R. Lunzaga WEST VISAYAS Rengie I. Quiteves NORTH MINDANAO Lydia B. Parojinog SOUTH MINDANAO Ceferina Pulgarinas

P'wede ka pa ring magwagi!

Ihabol na ang entries para sa

Jan. 22 Grand Draw!

Per DOH-BFAD Permit No. 0920 s.2003

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Influx of new feeds worries pet owners

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

A GROUP that calls itself Responsible Pet Owners has expressed concern over the influx of new pet food in the market. They are worried about the indiscriminate buying of pet foods by the general public. They noted that the nutritional information on labels of these products is difficult for the layman to decipher.

According to the group, owners should know what food is best for their pets. Dogs and cats can suffer from dietary problems as a result of eating the wrong pet food. Some products may have too much calories or fat, or they may be short on nutrients needed by the pet.

The group warned pets could suffer from malnutrition as a result of these new products, or they could have problems related to eating too much pet food.

Sale of expired and badly stored pet food also seems to be a problem, based on previous complaints from consumers. One of our letter writers complained that the frozen pet food he bought in a supermarket had a foul smell when cooked, Another complained that pet food sold in the wet market was made of scrap meat and had too much fat.

Then there's a member of an association of local guinea pig raisers who griped about the contaminated feed that killed some of his prized pets. It turned out that a toxic fungus developed in the feed while in storage.

We asked Marina Estacio, officer-in-charge of the Animal Feed Standards Division of the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), about the pet owners' concerns.

She said prior to release in the local market, all animal feeds, including pet food, have to pass rigorous scientific testing to find out if they meet the standards set by the BAI.

For the protection of pets, she advises buyers to look for the BAI certification on the package of products. If there is none, buyers should report to the Animal Feed Standards Division (tel. 9247954 and 9201764).

Estacio also advised consumers to send complaints to BAI director Jose Q. Molina, Visayas Ave., Diliman, QC 1101 or call 9266883 and 9270971.

Incidentally, BAI has an office called the Animal Welfare Abuses Division that hears and acts on reports of animal abuse and cruelty. For more information, call Dr. Angel Antonio B. Mateo at 9261522.

Mad at canine club

It has been over a month since we forwarded a complaint to the Philippine Canine Club Inc. (PCCI). Until now, we have not heard from the club regarding the complaint of pet owner Wendell Inocentes (vinocentes@cyberjresources.com).

In his letter, Inocentes related the ordeal he and his friend experienced when he registered his dog with the club in August.

"We registered the dog, paid the fee on Aug. 7, and waited weeks for the paper to be released. We badly needed the dog's papers since a buyer was already pressing us to give them the dog," Inocentes related. He alleged they were given the run-around and treated badly by club personnel and, on Aug. 26, an officer hung up on him while he was pressing for the release of the papers.

We hope PCCI has released the registration papers by now.

Feedback on radio-TV ads

Here are comments from readers on the television ads we mentioned last week in this column:

From a texter of globetextm.com.ph: "What is really offensive in the shampoo ad is the guy calling her girlfriend *pare*. I may be conservative, but I still insist that women should be treated with respect. Calling her *pare* is not my idea of good or gentlemanly conduct."

From erwin@yahoo.com: "Your media friend over-emoted over the wrong value imparted by the ad that showed a girl pouring water on the head of a guy. It's just clean fun, and I am sure that kids who watch the ad will take it that way."

Reader who requested anonymity wrote: "That ad showing an undernourished kid being taunted by playmates as *'lampayatot'*—contraction of the words *'lampa na, payatot pa'*—does not show a good example to children. It may impart the message that it is all right to be mean to people with physical defects or deficiencies."

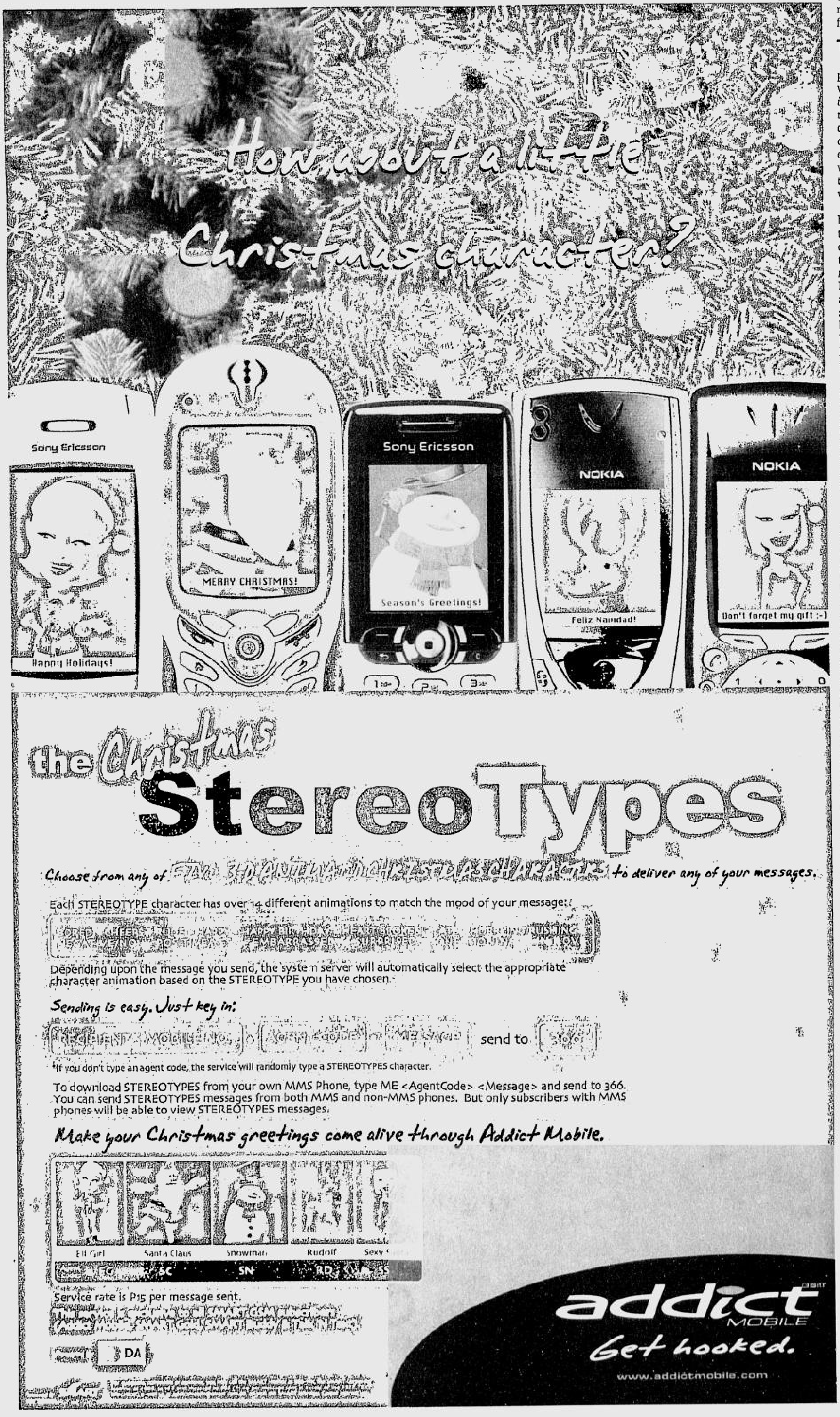
Taxi woes

A. Gomez (tbknorth@eastern.com.ph) reported that the taxi (name and plate number withheld) he and his wife took had a "*batingting*," a tampering device that speeds up the meter. From the P25 flag down, the meter accelerated to P33 in just a few seconds. The couple called the attention of the driver, who expectedly replied there was something wrong with his meter. "He then reset the meter, evidently to the normal mode. It was a white Toyota Corolla," Gomez added.

From Concerned-Taxi-Rider: "I had just boarded the cab sent by the taxi-on-call operator when I noticed that the driver did not flag down the meter. When I reminded him about the meter, he asked, "*Gagamit ba tayo ng metro?*" He then switched on the meter. When I reached my destination, I handed over the amount registered on the meter and added a small tip, too. I was surprised when the driver became furious and berated me for the amount I paid him. He was saying I should be paying a lot more because his cab was a pick-up service unit that had to be sent to pick me up."

We called up EMP taxi for comment. Lady-on-board "Irene" advised complainants to report similar incidents to Francis Isip (2917005, preferably in the morning), president of the EMP Drivers Association. They should give the taxi plate number, possibly name of the driver, time and date of incident, and pertinent details. Irene added that errant drivers were subject to disciplinary action.

E-mail mgiron@i-manila.com.ph



Choose from any of FIVE 3D ANIMATED CHRISTMAS CHARACTERS *to deliver any of your messages.*

Each STEREOTYPE character has over 14 different animations to match the mood of your message:

[illegible]

Depending upon the message you send, the system server will automatically select the appropriate character animation based on the STEREOTYPE you have chosen.

Sending is easy. Just key in:

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*If you don't type an agent code, the service will randomly type a STEREOTYPES character.

To download STEREOTYPES from your own MMS Phone, type ME <AgentCode> <Message> and send to 366. You can send STEREOTYPES messages from both MMS and non-MMS phones. But only subscribers with MMS phones will be able to view STEREOTYPES messages.

Make your Christmas greetings come alive through Addict Mobile.

Service rate is P15 per message sent.

Design your own SUMMER ADVENTURES in a CUP NOODLES cup
CUP NOODLES
"Walang CUPpares sa sarap!"

Design your own cup and win cash prize

ARE you a student who's creative and full of bright ideas? Do you like tinkering with different materials to produce an original piece of artwork? Then you should join the ongoing Nissin Cup Noodles design-making contest. Not only will you get a chance to win P5,000, your school will also win another P5,000. What's more, your winning design will be featured in the coming Nissin Cup CollectiCups limited edition.

Nissin Cup Noodles has for many years promoted the "CollectiCups" campaign, where consumers were made aware of the reusability of Nissin cups. And to encourage consumers to take an interactive part in this promo, Nissin Cup Noodles launches the CollectiCups design-making contest, open to students in all levels. Each contestant may design as many entries as he wishes, using the theme, how to make one's summer a perfect adventure.

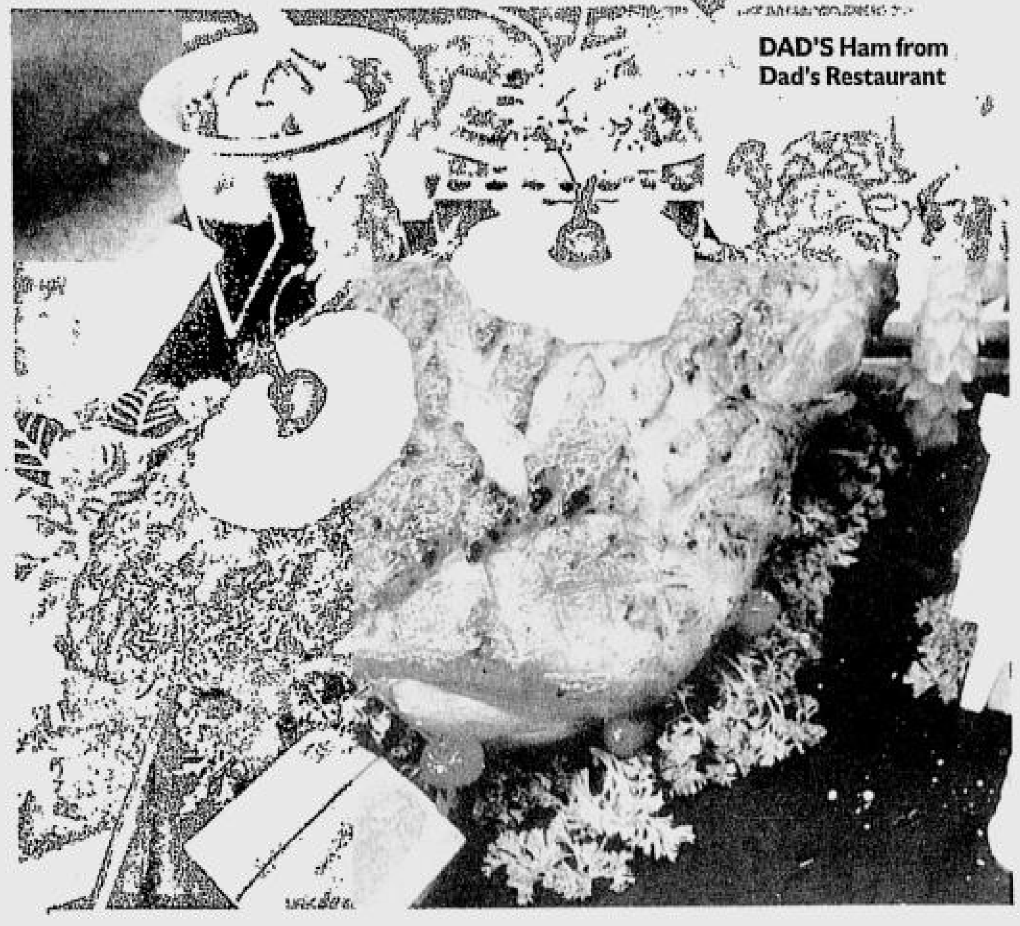
Materials to be used are: white construction paper, watercolor, crayons, poster colors, oil pastels (limited to six colors).

Six winners will be chosen from the many entries to be submitted. Criteria for judging are: concept (30 percent), creativity (30 percent) and impact (40 percent) for a total of 100 percent.

Deadline for submission is on Jan. 16, 2004. Submit/mail your entries to Advertising Ventures, Inc., 3/F, Richeville Corporate Center, 1314 Commerce Ave. Extension, Madrigal Business Park, Ayala Alabang, Muntinlupa.

For feedback, text us at (0919) 880-3354 or (0916) 200-1160
or e-mail us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

LIFESTYLE



DAD'S Ham from Dad's Restaurant

Holiday smorgasbord

Text by Jasmine W. Payo
Photos by Egay Montaño

IN A RECENT one-day food presentation in Alabang Town Center (ATC), 25 kiosks and restaurants proved that by adding colorful dips and relishes or just serving meals in fine china, you can turn any fast food to fab food.

Some of the eye-catching and mouth-watering dishes on display that you'd surely want on your Noche Buena table were the Sautéed Prawns and Scallops in a basket from Gloria Maris; Dad's Ham from Dad's Restaurant; Porchetta (roast pig Roman style) from Cibo; Kung Pao Spaghetti from California Pizza Kitchen; and Crab Maritess from The Red Crab Seafood and Steaks.

"One of the strongest anchors of ATC is the variety of food we have. All these restaurants are zoned strategically in different parts of the mall. And in this presentation, we want to acquaint people with the various establishments," said Javier Hernandez, general manager of Alabang Town Center.

Aside from Cibo, California Pizza Kitchen and The Red Crab, three other restaurants from the mall's Cortes de las Palmas area presented Christmas-themed meals.

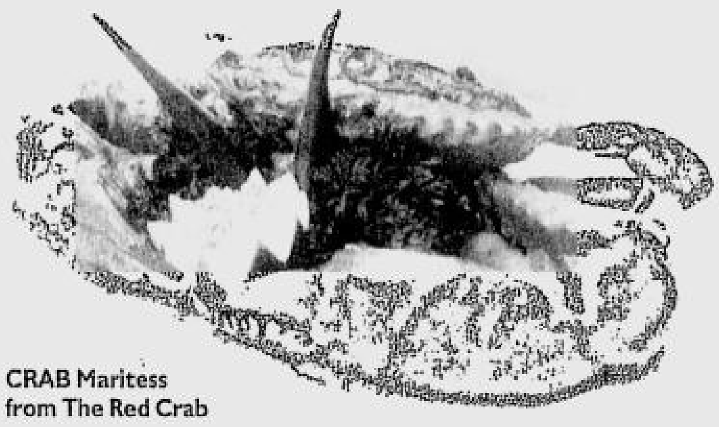
There were Rib-Eye Angus Beef and Agedashi Tofu from Sakura; Blanket Prawns and Texmex Platter from Tequila Joe's; and Fondues from Häagen Dazs.

"Cortes de las Palmas is where you can dine al fresco, with its relaxing Spanish plaza setting," said Hernandez.

Representing the cinema and entertainment areas were familiar meals from familiar restaurants such as the Fiesta Taco Salad and Crispy Belly from Pancake House; and Fried Chicken and Special Clubhouse Sandwich from Gerry's Grill.

There were also meat patties

HOLIDAY/ D3



CRAB Maritess from The Red Crab

SHAKEY'S New York Pizza

ORG
&
Ortigas & Company
Limited Partnership
Present
The 1st
Ortigas Countdown 2004

"There is definitely no better way to celebrate New Year."

Everyone is invited to the
KUBERVIA PARTY
for FREE !

With Manila's top
DJs Elmer Dado,
Mon Maramba,
JT Ruis, Kevin Ruiz, MCJ
giving you the finest selection of disco house tracks
for your absolute partying pleasure.

Be among the few to witness history!

December 31,2003
9:00 pm
Prestige parking, Carpark A,
ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center,
Pasig City
(Fronting ADB Building
and Robinson's Galleria Mall)

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W chillystar
W zweight
W felixsnowman
W singingwoody
W chillywilly
W zsmile
W felixxmas
W woodysanta
W chillyigloo
W zwaiting
W mimixmas

ANIME

W daimosrobot
W hxhcast
W yoh&anna
W lrcast
W 3goddess2

MARVEL

W evoxme..
W uxwolvieclaws
W thortitle
W punisherhole
W panthertitle

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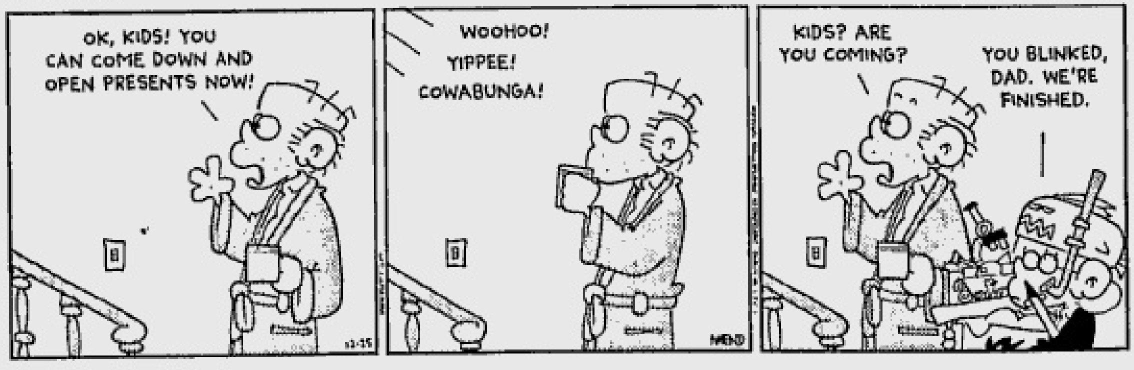
'tis the season to make great things possible Globe

Until Dec. 31 only. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 2929, Series of 2003.

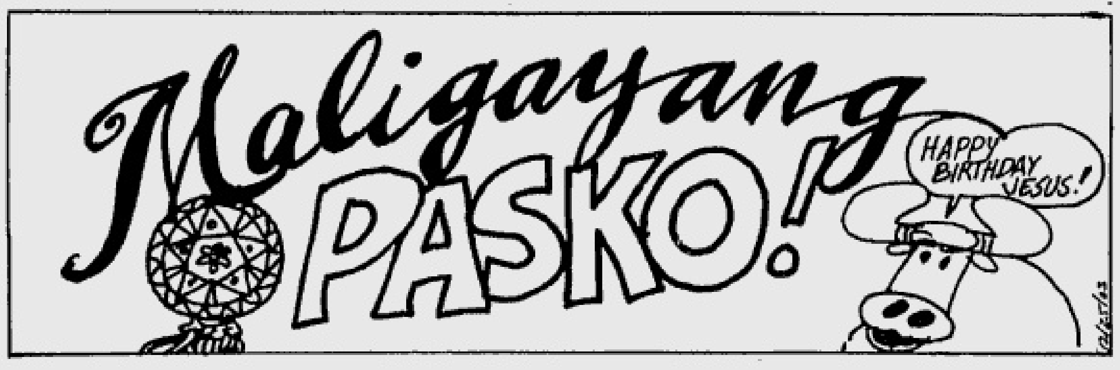
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


OK, KIDS! YOU CAN COME DOWN AND OPEN PRESENTS NOW!
WOOHOO!
YIPPEE!
COWABUNGA!
KIDS? ARE YOU COMING?
YOU BLINKED, DAD. WE'RE FINISHED.

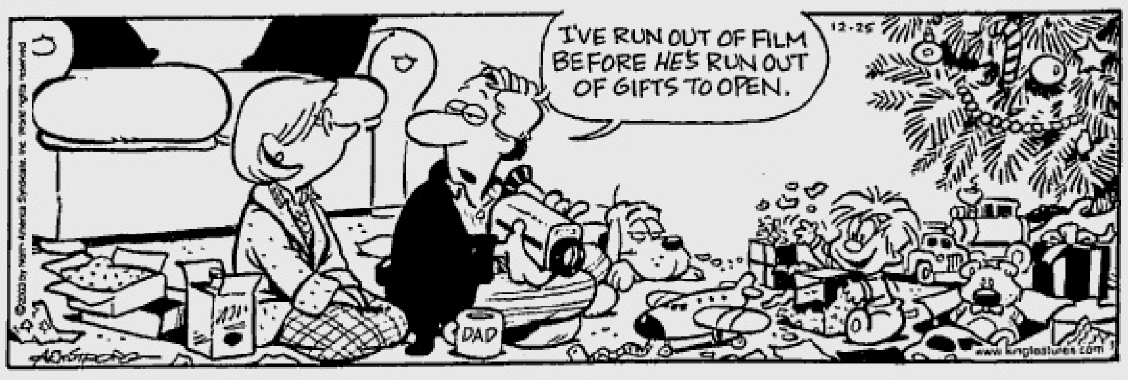
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


Maligayang PASKO!
HAPPY BIRTHDAY JESUS!

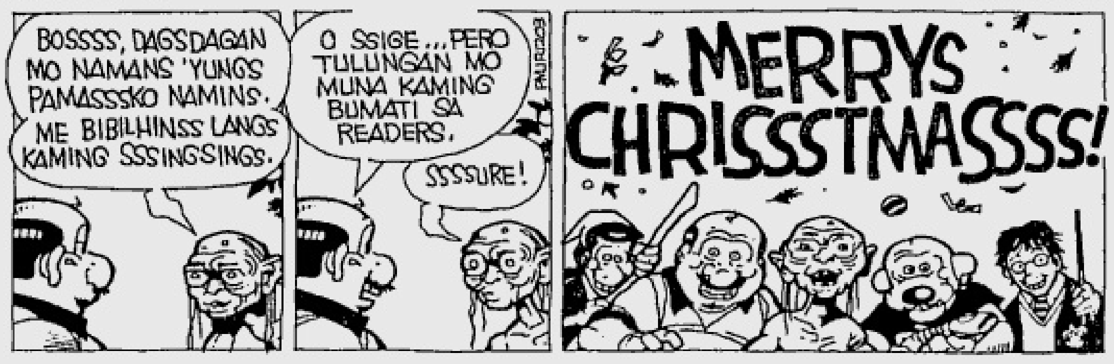
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


I'VE RUN OUT OF FILM BEFORE HE'S RUN OUT OF GIFTS TO OPEN.
DAD
12-25

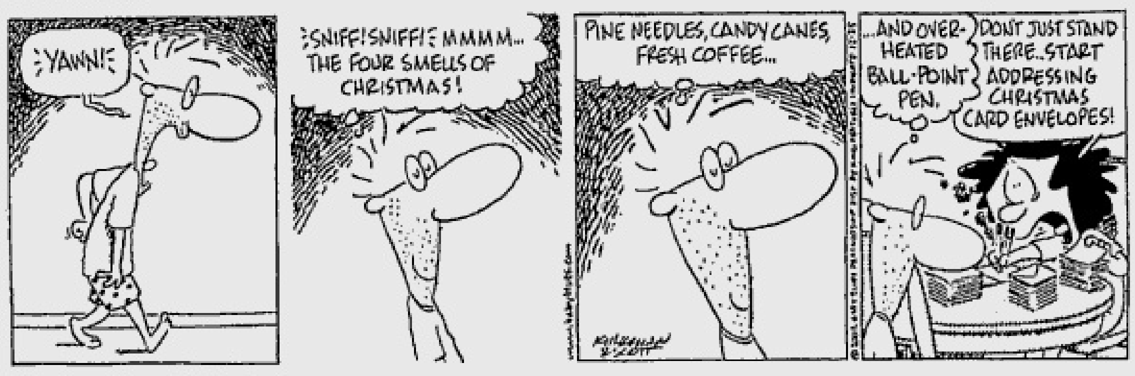
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


BOSSSS, DAGSDAGAN MO NAMANS 'YUNGS PAMASSSKO NAMINS. ME BIBILHINSS LANGS KAMING SSSINGSINGS.
O SSIGE... PERO TULUNGAN MO MUNA KAMING BUMATI SA READERS.
SSSSURE!
MERRYS CHRISSSTMASSSS!

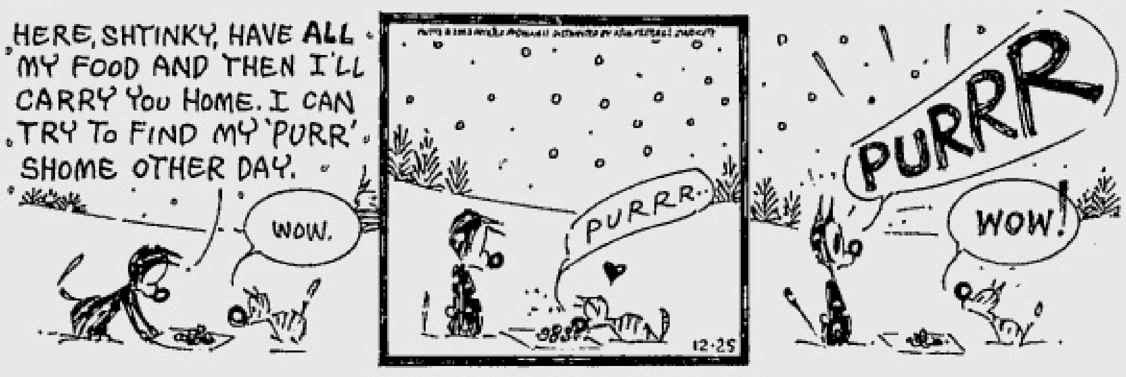
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


YAWN!
SNIFF! SNIFF! MMMM... THE FOUR SMELLS OF CHRISTMAS!
PINE NEEDLES, CANDY CANES, FRESH COFFEE...
...AND OVER-HEATED BALL-POINT PEN.
DON'T JUST STAND THERE.. START ADDRESSING CHRISTMAS CARD ENVELOPES!

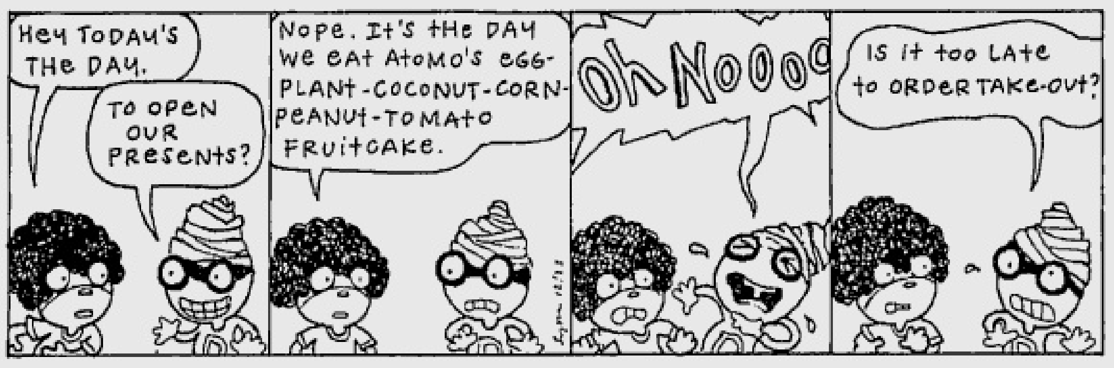
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


HERE, SHTINKY, HAVE ALL MY FOOD AND THEN I'LL CARRY YOU HOME. I CAN TRY TO FIND MY 'PURR' SHOME OTHER DAY.
WOW.
PURRR.
PURRR
WOW!
12-25

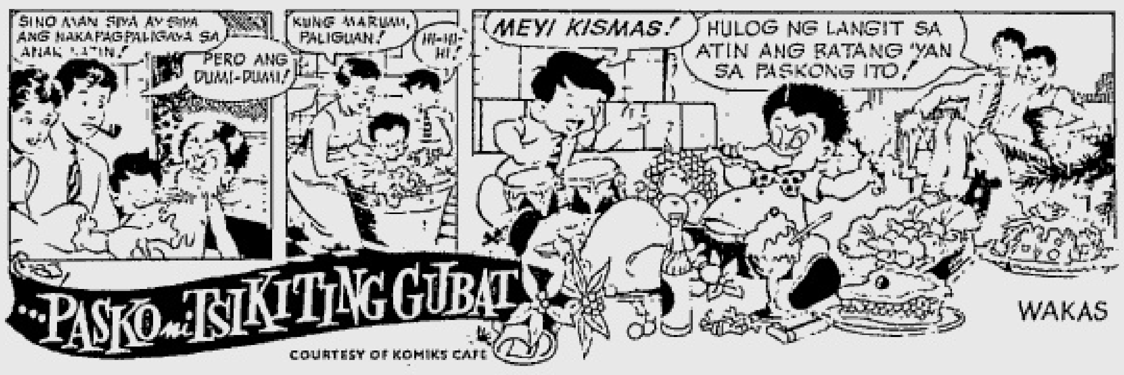
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Hey Today's the day.
To open our presents?
Nope. It's the day we eat Atomo's egg-plant-coconut-corn-peanut-tomato fruitcake.
Oh Noooo
Is it too late to order take-out?

KENKOY KLASIKS

BY TONY VELASQUEZ


SINO MAN SIYA AY SIYA ANG NAKAPAGPALIGAYA SA ANAK NATIN!
PERO ANG DUMI-DUMI!
KUNG MARUMI, PALIGUAN!
HI-HI-HI!
MEY! KISMAS!
HULOG NG LANGIT SA ATIN ANG BATANG 'YAN SA PASKONG ITO!
...PASKO ni TSIKITING GUBAT
WAKAS

COURTESY OF KOMIKS CAFE

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: Your bold and daring character leads you to adventure. You often seek out the unusual because you want a peak experience. You're definitely a risk taker, always willing to go that extra mile. You constantly revise your goals. The year ahead is exciting because you will learn something entirely new. (Expect increased solitude.)

Birthdate of: Barbara Mandrell, singer; Carlos Castaneda, anthropologist/writer: Humphrey Bogart, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Go gently today. Whether you realize it or not, you are looking for a fight. You're in the mood to challenge parents and all authority figures. Chill out.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): It's not important to defend your beliefs about religion, politics and philosophical ideas today. Your impulse to do this is because you identify with what you believe in now.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Disagreements about shared possessions and who is responsible for can arise today. Wait a day or two, you will feel completely different about this subject.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Tension with partners is likely today. Don't get your belly in a rash. Don't sweat the small stuff. When the annals of history are written, this will be peanuts.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You want others to follow your example when working on something today or just getting organized (whatever). Lighten up on your expectations. Just boss yourself—not everyone around you.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Be extra-patient with children today. Increased sugar intake during the holiday season makes them cranky and overactive. You were once a kid too. (Just cope with kindness.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Family disagreements (especially with partners) can arise today. Remember that your long-term objective is your need to be surrounded by peace and harmony. Also remember that it takes two to make a fight.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Competitiveness with siblings and neighbors could irk you today. But you don't have to feel this way. You can be patient and just smile a lot. (A far happier choice.)

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Romantic expectations or something to do with money and possessions makes you anxious today. Don't even go there. Let it all go. Life is too short to ruin your own day or anyone else's.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): If you're too bossy today, it will be quite unbecoming. (Remember that you care what others think about you.) Demonstrate grace under pressure.

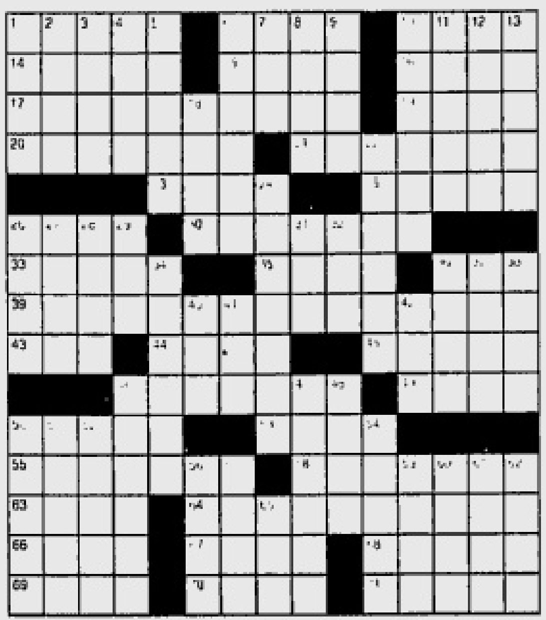
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Unexpressed expectations almost always lead to disappointment. You have to be more direct about what you want.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Don't quarrel with a friend about money or possessions today. This is an important day for many people. Instead, show how understanding and graciously patient you can be.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Worked at blackjack
6 Sum and substance
10 David, for one
14 Borden's spokescow
15 Old-time newspaper section
16 __ vera
17 With 64A, patriotic comparative
19 Clumsy fellow
20 Harry Dean Stanton movie
21 For this reason
23 Audible breath
25 Goes underground
26 Taxis
30 Pasta
33 Consume completely
35 Hammock anchor, maybe
36 Product to mine
39 Old Glory
43 Quantity of gold
44 End of a buck?
45 Approaching vertical
46 Promised
49 Alone
50 Take a powder!
53 Urban renewal target
55 Gossip fodder
58 Western and Denver
63 Polish prose
64 See 17A
66 Emit a beam
67 M. Descartes
68 Sheepish?
69 Savage or Couples
70 U.S. leader
71 Comparatively affable

DOWN
1 Letter opener
2 Otherwise
3 In an NYC minute
4 Ritzy wheels
5 Abounds (with)
6 Fonda film, "Old __"
7 Quadrennially prominent grp.
8 Knife thrust
9 Verbal subtlety
10 French port
11 So to be heard
12 Cursor controller
13 Fountain and Rose
18 Downpour
22 British toast
24 Franks
26 Pointed end
27 Regarding
28 Dog tired
29 Big __, CA
31 Med. personnel
32 Do-over tennis service
34 David's poetry
36 Bid first
37 Stagger
38 Spot in a crowd
40 Exist
41 Sign of assent
42 Robert or Lance
46 Separated
47 Takes flight to unite
48 Waste treatment center
50 Storage space
51 Aromatic wood
52 Pay hike
54 Juicy fruit
56 Seniors' org.
57 Belgian river
59 Son of Jacob
60 Heroic tale
61 Fork point
62 Oracle
65 Sue __ Langdon



By Gregory E. Paul
Scottdale, PA

12/25/03

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

S	L	I	D	■	L	I	L	A	C	■	C	A	T	O
L	O	G	E	■	A	D	E	L	A	■	A	D	A	M
I	C	O	N	■	S	E	A	T	S	■	S	I	K	A
T	H	R	O	W	S	A	N	O	H	I	T	T	E	R
■	■	■	U	R	I	S	■	■	M	O	E	■	■	■
T	O	W	N	I	E	■	A	D	E	N	■	A	B	S
E	N	A	C	T	■	S	T	E	R	■	O	B	I	E
M	A	K	E	S	A	H	O	L	E	I	N	O	N	E
P	I	E	R	■	N	E	L	I	■	W	I	R	E	D
F	R	E	■	P	A	I	L	■	S	P	O	T	T	Y
■	■	■	A	I	T	■	■	S	E	E	N	■	■	■
H	I	T	S	T	H	E	B	U	L	L	S	E	Y	E
A	L	I	T	■	E	R	A	S	E	■	K	E	E	L
S	I	L	O	■	M	A	N	I	C	■	I	R	A	S
P	E	E	N	■	A	S	S	E	T	■	N	O	R	A

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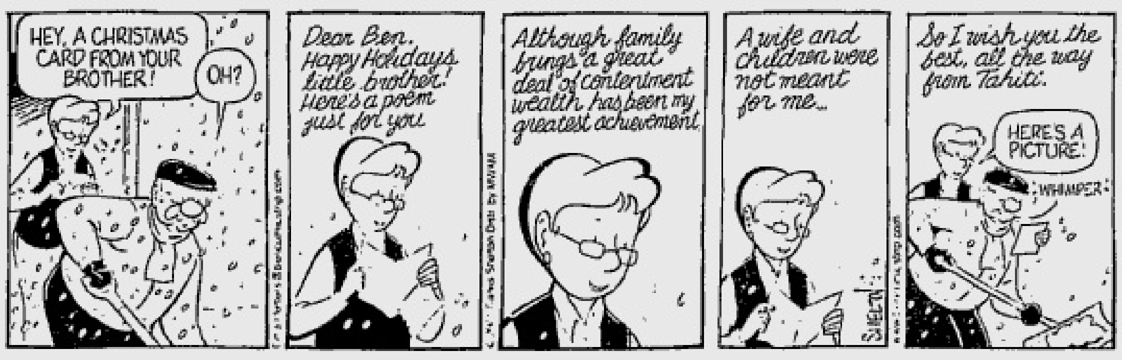
12/25/03

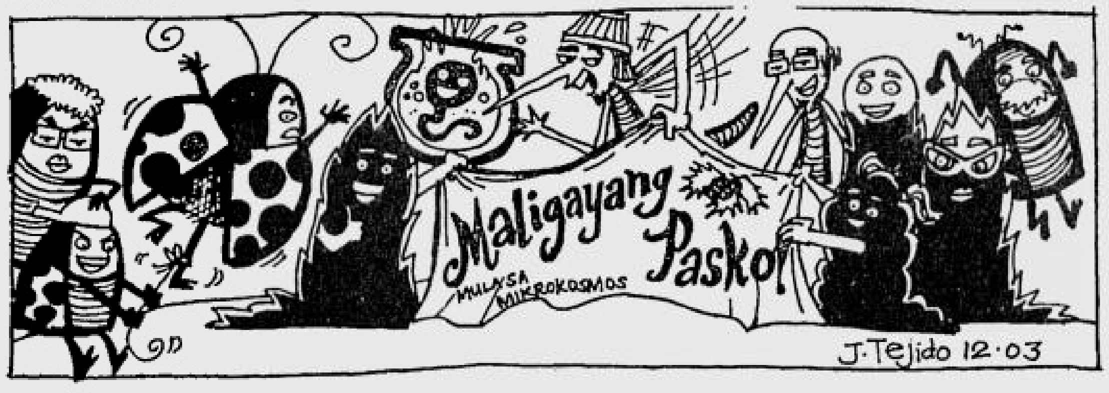
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


HEY, A CHRISTMAS CARD FROM YOUR BROTHER!
OH?
Dear Ben, Happy Holidays little brother! Here's a poem just for you
Although family brings a great deal of contentment wealth has been my greatest achievement.
A wife and children were not meant for me...
So I wish you the best, all the way from Tahiti.
HERE'S A PICTURE!
WHIMPER

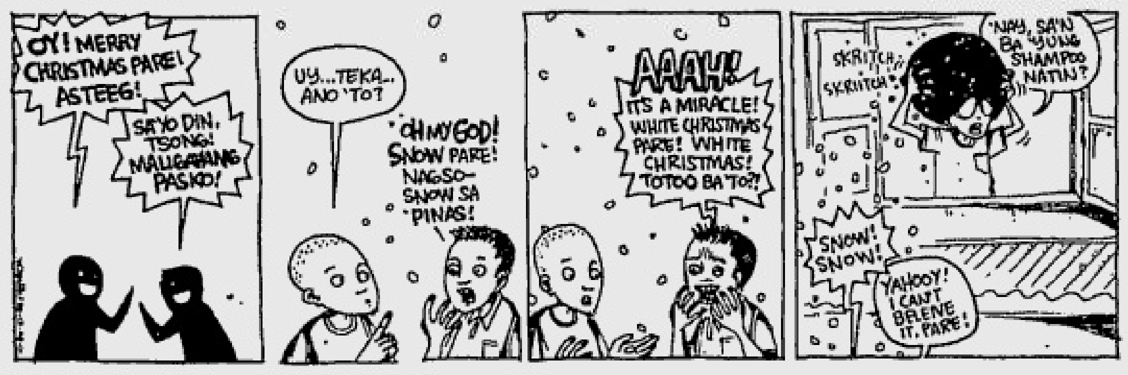
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


Maligayang Pasko!
MULA SA MIKROKOSMOS
J. Tejido 12·03

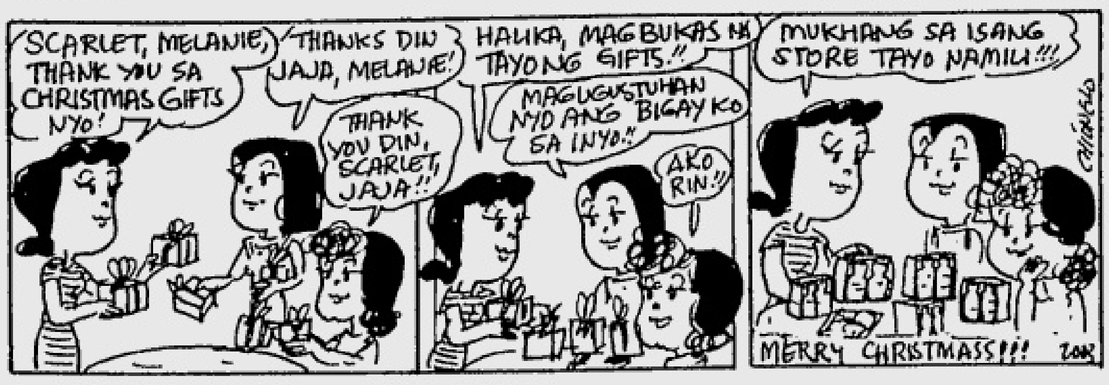
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


OY! MERRY CHRISTMAS PARE! ASTEEG!
SA'YO DIN, TSONG! MALIGAYANG PASKO!
UY...TEKA.. ANO 'TO?
OH MY GOD! SNOW PARE! NAGSO-SNOW SA PINAS!
AAAH! IT'S A MIRACLE! WHITE CHRISTMAS PARE! WHITE CHRISTMAS! TOTOO BA 'TO?!
SKRITCH SKRITCH
'NAY, SA'N BA 'YUNG SHAMPOO NATIN?
SNOW! SNOW!
YAHOOY! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT, PARE!

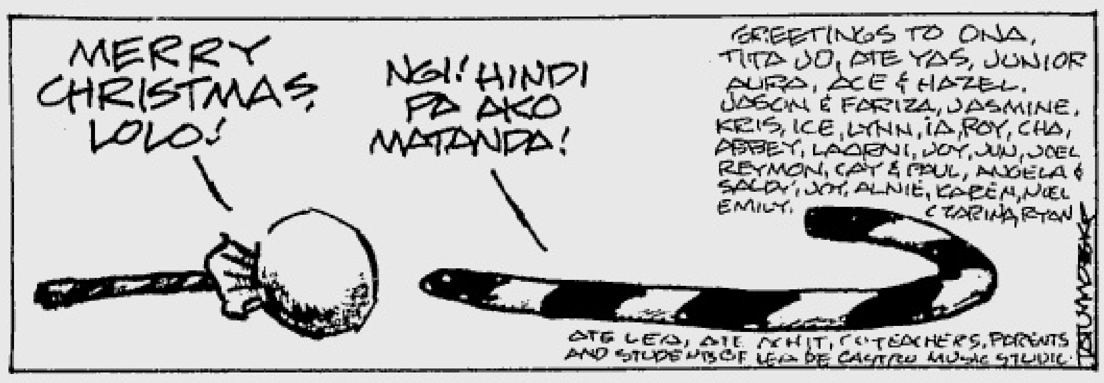
LOVEKNOTS

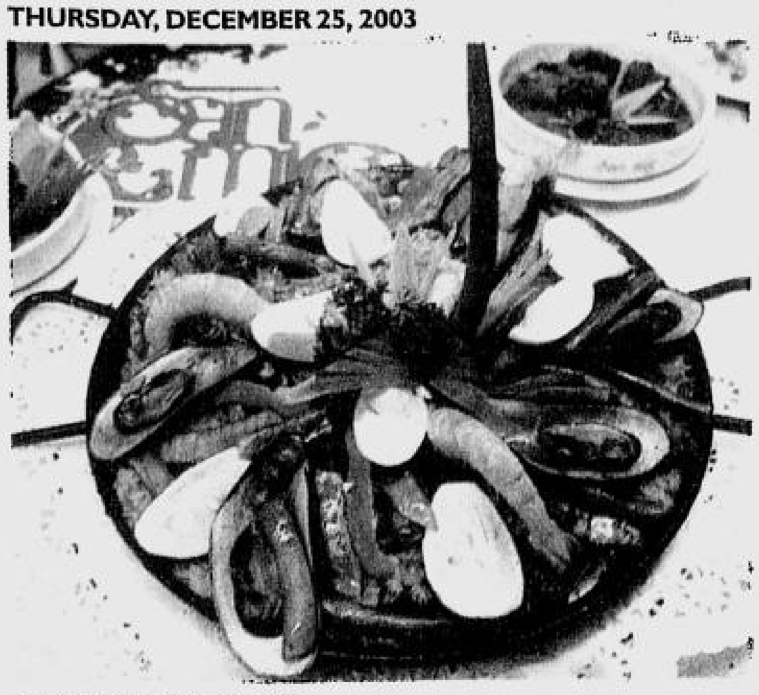
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


SCARLET, MELANIE, THANK YOU SA CHRISTMAS GIFTS NYO!
THANKS DIN JAJA, MELANIE!
THANK YOU DIN, SCARLET, JAJA!!
HALIKA, MAGBUKAS NA TAYO NG GIFTS!!
MAGUGUSTUHAN NYO ANG BIGAY KO SA INYO!!
AKO RIN!!
MUKHANG SA ISANG STORE TAYO NAMILI!!!
MERRY CHRISTMASS!!!
CHIONGLO

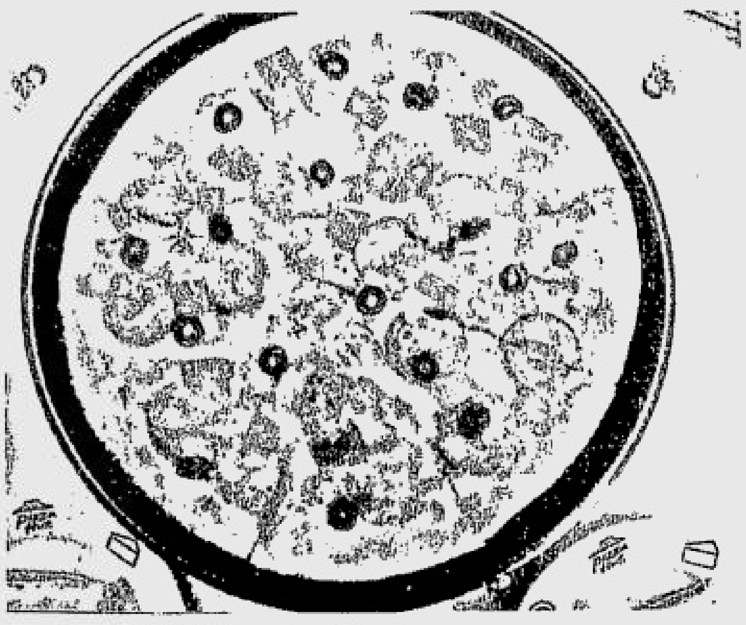
TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING

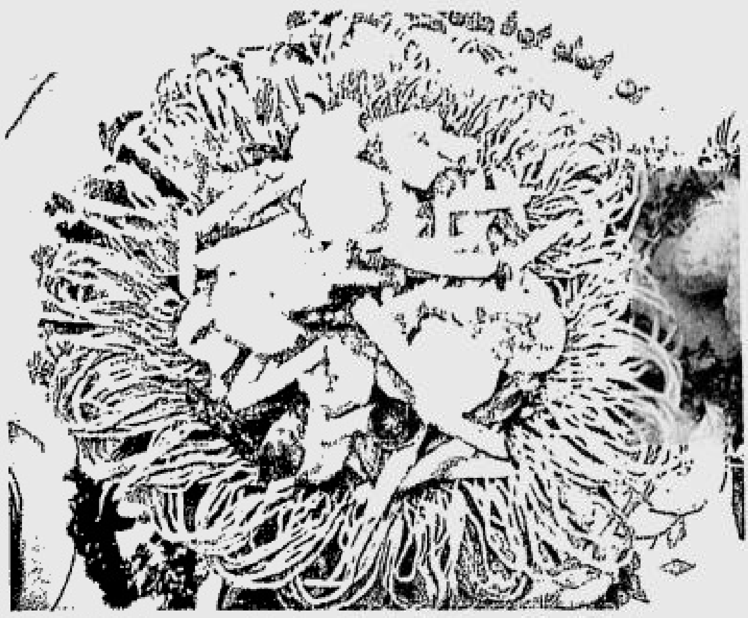

MERRY CHRISTMAS, LOLO!
NGI! HINDI PA AKO MATANDA!
GREETINGS TO ONA, TITA JO, ATE YAS, JUNIOR AURA, ACE & HAZEL, JASON & FARIZA, JASMINE, KRIS, ICE, LYNN, IA, ROY, CHA, ABBEY, LAARNI, JOY, JUN, JOEL REYMON, CAY & PAUL, ANGELA & SALDY, JOY, ALNIE, KAREN, NIEL EMILY. CZARINA, RYAN
ATE LEA, ATE ACHIT, CO-TEACHERS, PARENTS AND STUDENTS OF LEA DE CASTRO MUSIC STUDIO
TATUM



PAELLA from San Mig Pub



CHICKEN Relleno Pizza from Pizza Hut



SAUTÉED Prawns and Scallops in a basket from Gloria Maris

Holiday smorgasbord

From page D1

from Royal Caribbean Jamaican Patti; *tapsilog* from Tapa King; and the new Chicken Relleno Pizza from Pizza Hut.

Treats from coffee shops also sat on the Christmas buffet table. There were paninis and tiramisu from Coffee Experience; and cookies and cupcakes from Café Nescafe.

"The restaurants in the cinema area are where families or *barkadas* dine. [They make] the best side trip after a movie or an hour of games at Timezone," said Hernandez.

Flavorful

Other yummy fares at the Christmas food presentation were the flavorful ice shavings with fruit toppings from Ice Monsters; Taiwanese pastries from Pat Lin; soft-handrolled pretzels from Auntie Anne's; Filipino dishes from Balot Balot Republic; and classic pizzas from Shakey's.

All located at the Activity Center and Food Choices of the Town Foodcourt, these are the affordable options patronized by yuppies and students.

Joining Dad's Restaurant to represent the Town Plaza were San Mig Pub and Restaurant, which served Paella; and Cable Car, which provided Foccacia Bread Pizza, Tuna Lumpia and Spring Rolls. There were also homegrown coffee blends from Jamica Coffee.

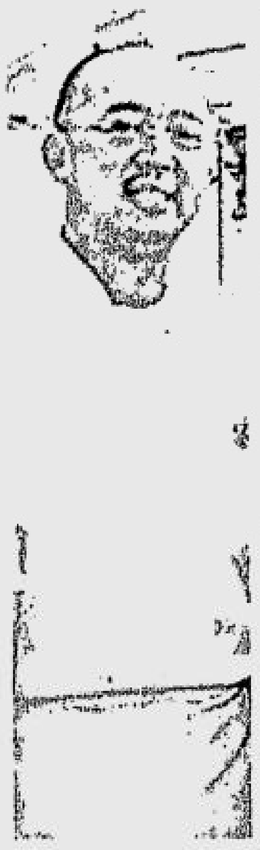
"The Town Plaza is where people go for *barkada* night outs and gimmicks," noted Hernandez.

Rounding up the Christmas buffet were restaurants from the Theater Drive—Gloria Maris, which also offered Shredded Duck Fruit Salad, and Outback Restaurant, which served Beef Adelaide, Kookabura Wings and Salséus Sausages.

It was an interesting Christmas smorgasbord that enticed passersby of all stripes.

"People think that we only have the AB market here in ATC. But we really have something for everyone," said Hernandez.

> 'People think that we only have the AB market here in Alabang Town Center. But we really have something for everyone'

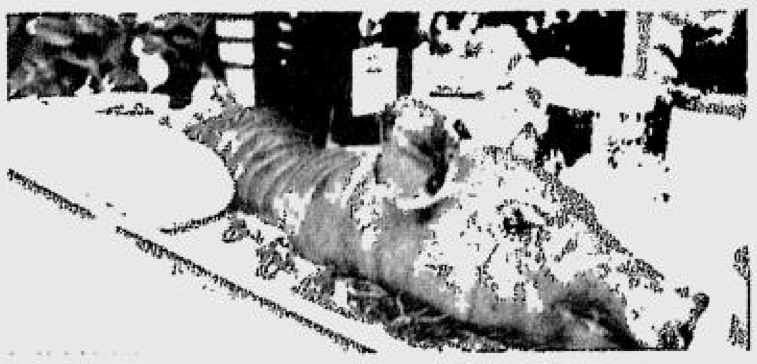


SAKURA chef Archie Castillo

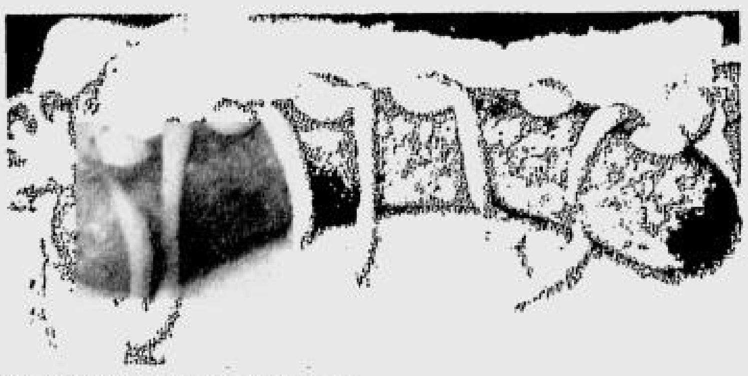
ATC general manager Javier Hernandez with his staff: marketing manager Maricris Bernardino, operations manager Monet Aluquin and marketing assistant Christine Enriquez

ROYAL Carribean Jamaican Patti in various beef flavors

CONGREJOS de Rizal from The Red Crab



PORCHETTA (roast pig Roman style) from Cibo



SALSÉUS Sausage from Outback

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MARVEL
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- L hulknameblk
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- L thor
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Recipe for success in life and kitchen

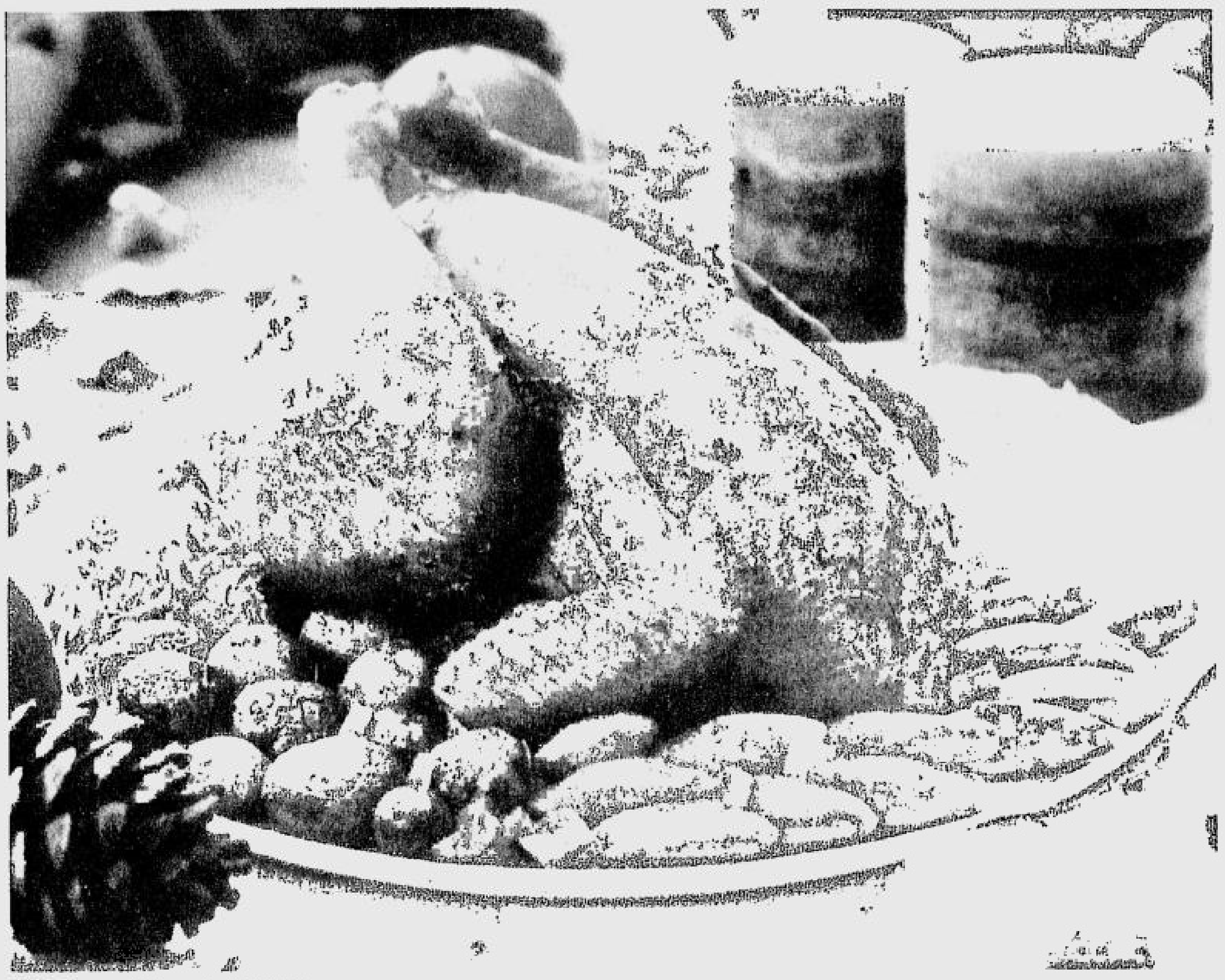
CULINARY expert Sylvia Reynoso Gala learned from her father that to get the best results, one should put in only the best. This has become her recipe for success in life and the kitchen.

Her father, the late architect Jose Reynoso of Pasig, taught her that, as people only lived once, they should always go for the best so they would emerge winners.

Reynoso-Gala, who trained in various schools here and abroad, has since started to share her skills through her cooking school founded in 1970 which is now on Shaw Blvd., Pasig City; a television show with her son Ernest, "What's Cooking @ Sylvia's Kitchen," Saturdays on ABC-5, and column for a food magazine with her two children.

With her children, who are following in her footsteps, and her students, Reynoso-Gala always stresses the need to know the ingredients well and what they can do.

Sylvia Reynoso-Gala believes in simplifying the seemingly difficult



HERB Roasted Magnolia Gold Chicken

She advises budding chefs to create from the basics and to simplify the seemingly difficult. She says a good product should be able to stand on its own.

Reynoso-Gala says she only endorses products by companies that never compromise on quality. One product that has met her standards is Magnolia Gold Butter, which she says is "the freshest and tastiest butter in supermarket shelves."

For the holidays, she shares a recipe using Magnolia Gold Butter.

Herb Roasted Magnolia Gold Chicken

½ c Magnolia Gold Butter (Salted), softened
2 tbsp rock salt
1 tbsp whole peppercorn
2 tsp Spanish paprika
¼ tsp thyme
¼ tsp basil
¼ tsp oregano
2 head garlic, crushed
1 pc bay leaf, crushed
1 1.5 kg Magnolia Whole Chicken
juice of 1 lemon
1 kg medium-size potatoes unpeeled cut into two

Garnishing:
1 pc lemon, rind grated into thin strips
red and green coral lettuce to line the platter

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Mix butter, salt, peppercorn, paprika, thyme, basil, oregano, bay leaf and garlic in a small bowl.

Cut off the neck of the chicken and separate skin from the meat with your fingers.

Rub chicken all over with lemon juice, then with the Magnolia Gold Butter mixture including the cavity.

Tie the legs and put chicken and potatoes in an oven bag or glass oven-proof dish with cover.

Roas[illegible] hour and 45 minutes.

Put on plate with drippings and garnish with lemon strips.

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A dash of excitement to food

ADD zest to grilled chicken, roasted duck and spareribs with Lee Kum Kee Hoisin Sauce.

The reddish-brown spicy, sweet, thick sauce is made of selected spices and ground soybeans. It is used to accent marinades roasts and stir-fries or as a condiment.

Hoisin sauce, a Cantonese specialty, is also known as barbecue sauce. Called the Peking Sauce in western countries, hoisin is mixed with a bit of sesame oil and is used with Peking Duck, hence the name.

Hoisin sauce is the dip of choice for egg rolls, Char Siu or Mu Shu pork and Peking Duck in Chinese banquets. Mandarin pancakes or Chinese steamed buns are also brushed with hoisin sauce for flavor.

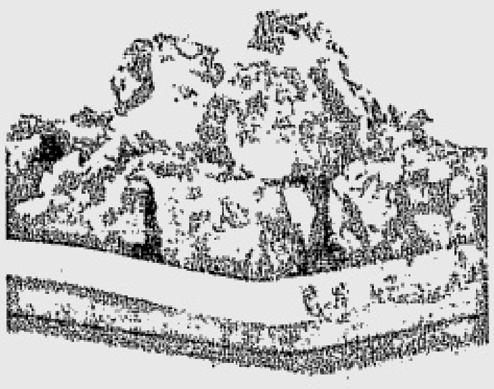
Use Lee Kum Kee Hoisin Sauce for sweet-spicy-tasting spareribs.

To cook, marinate 400g spareribs, chopped into pieces, for 30 minutes in the following mixture: 2 tbsp hoisin sauce, ¼ tsp salt and 1 egg.

Dust spareribs with cornstarch then deep fry in hot oil until cooked. Drain. Sauté 1 tsp chopped red chilies, 1 tsp diced shallots and 2 tbsp chopped green onions in 2 tbsp cooking oil.

Prepare a sauce mix using 2 tbsp hoisin sauce, 2 tbsp water, 1 tbsp sugar, 1 tsp cornstarch and 2 tbsp white vinegar. Stir in fried spareribs [illegible] mix and heat through.

Lee Kum Kee Hoisin sauce is available in 3.5 oz, 8.5 oz and 14 oz bottles and 50g sachets at leading supermarkets and groceries.



SPARERIBS in Hoisin sauce

The bounty of bibingka

If you want your your *bibingka* any time, you can make it home with the Maya Oven Toaster Bibingka Cake Mix. No need to wait for the Christmas season every year to taste its Pinoy goodness.

Try this recipe for Pinipig Bibingka for a hearty Pinoy breakfast, or accompany it with Battered Chicken Lollipop and Wings for a fun and filling lunch.

Pinipig Bibingka

1 150-g pack Maya Oven Toaster Bibingka Cake Mix
1 egg
[illegible] c water
1 tbsp melted butter
banana leaf.

Topping:
½ c coconut milk
¼ c pinipig, toasted
¼ tsp salt
1 tsp vanilla
¼ c sugar

Prepare *bibingka* per directions in the package.

For the topping: Combine all the ingredients in a saucepan. Mix until sugar is slightly dissolved. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Continue cooking until thick. Cool.

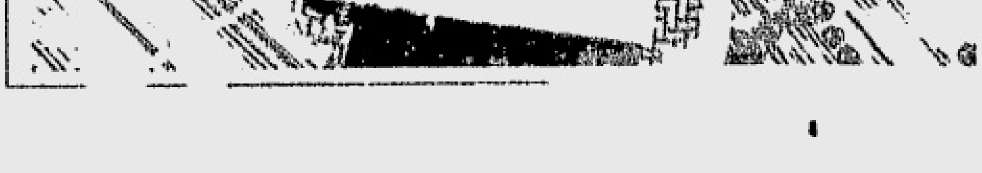
Spread topping over *bibingka*

Battered Chicken Lollipop and Wing

6 pcs chicken lollipop
6 pcs chicken wings
oil for frying
1 egg
2 tbsp oil
[illegible] c water
1 250-g pack Maya Original Hotcake Mix

Deep fry chicken lollipop and wings until brown. Set aside.

Prepare Hotcake Mix per package direction. Coat chicken lollipop and wings with the batter. Deep fry. Serve with mayonnaise dip.



PINIPIG Bibingka

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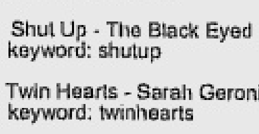

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keyword: shutup
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keyword: applesong
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keyword: sinosisanta
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keyword: xmasinurhart
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CAFÉ BOLA'S hip red-orange interiors

This café is a 'chick' magnet

By Alexandra Mercado
Contributor

THERE is something about Café Bola that makes it a "chick" magnet.

One Friday, while waiting for my lunch dates to arrive at Café Bola, I had nothing to do but observe the phenomenon at work. The pre-noon crowd started with nine women seated at four different tables. In 10 minutes, it had grown to six tables, but still no men. At around 12:20, we had about eight tables in use—a grand total of 19 women and one man.

REVIEW

What is it about this place that just calls to women?

To start with, it looks hip—very hip. In the tradition of the original Araneta Coliseum branch, the place takes the "bola" concept to the extreme with yellow orb lights on the ceiling and red, yellow and orange circular tubes on the wall.

Orange is no doubt the predominant color of the place, all the way down to the nectarine-colored bucket chairs. You might think you were in a funky SoHo diner were it not for the huge black and white stills from Filipino classic movies from the '50s and '60s covering the walls.

The design of the place is not particularly feminine—but the mere fact that so much attention was lavished on the aesthetics is something that, I believe, women can identify with and appreciate.

Comfort menu

When it comes to the menu, there are also lots of items that are sure to draw "oohs" and "ahhs" from the female set.

The range of fresh fruit shakes on offer, for instance, is wider than it is in any other restaurant I know, and offering it with or without milk is a very thoughtful gesture for discreet dieters.

I totally recommend the chico shake for those with a sweet tooth. For those who want a more tart and refreshing drink, the *kamias* shake rocks! And if you are lucky and the resto has it in stock, try the star apple shake as well. I swear it is an absolute crime to order a soda drink in this restaurant when such fabulous fruit shakes are available.

In keeping with the comfort food theme of the menu, the place offers dishes spun off from our favorite breakfast foods, yet with a funky twist. I'm not talking about hifalutin gourmet kind of twists. The kind of variations you find at Café Bola are not intimidating to the amateur foodie.

The use of very basic, very familiar ingredients gives the dishes an air of accessibility. These are dishes you can imagine yourself inventing on a rainy day at home.

Heavy on the rice

This lunchtime, I opted instead for the special of the day, which was fried leg of lamb *tapa* with fried egg and rice—a very *sosyal* version of *tapsilog*.

The lamb was cut in razor-thin strips around one inch long. But unlike beef or pork, each crisp bite of the lamb *tapa* was packed with flavor.

This is the kind of food we refer to as "rice-intensive" because you need a tablespoon of plain rice to chase the meat down. You also need the rice to fill your tummy, since you get a grand total of five to seven bits of meat, and even less if your lunchmates attempt to make *tikim*.

Thankfully, Bola does take its rice portions very seriously, and I think there is enough in the huge white bowls to make even a construction worker happy.

My two lunch dates were also in the mood for hearty meals. One ordered shredded *adobo* with *kesong puti*, while the other one ordered baby squid cooked in its own ink—both Pinoy home-cooked classics.

In my book, *adobo* is possibly the greatest contribution of Filipinos to world cuisine. No two *adobos* are alike, but I must say that I have never tried a really bad *adobo* in my life. It's nearly impossible to screw up or to burn, and when you re-cook it as leftovers, it actually gets better with age.

Shredded *adobo* is a new discovery in restaurants. If you have never seen it, it involves flaking the *adobo* meat into shreds and frying them to a crisp. The top two versions of this dish for me are at Floating Island in

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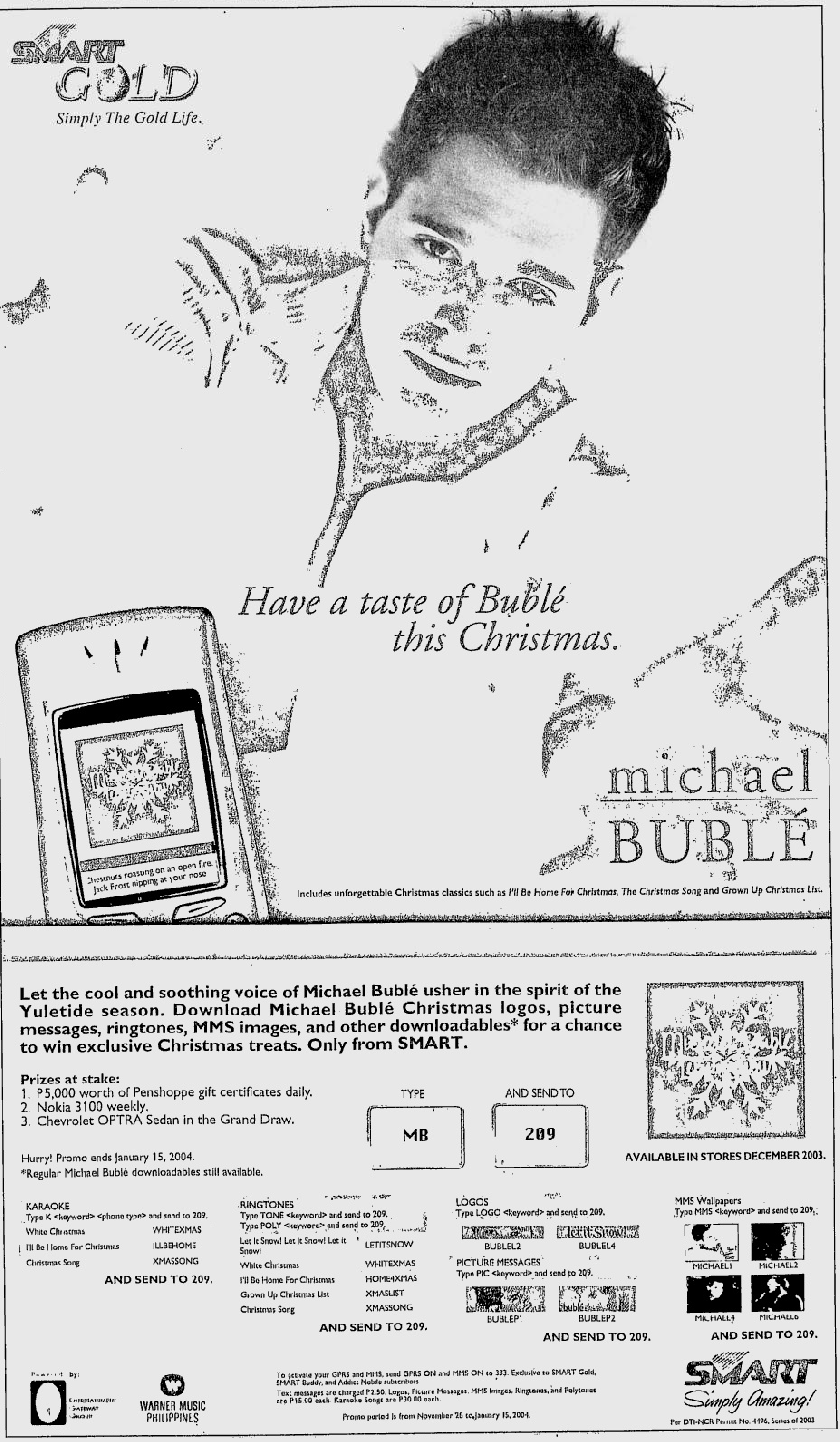

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4496, Series of 2003

World-class Pinoy foods, beverages showcased

THE PHILIPPINES' homegrown Barako was showcased at the recent Asian Ethnic Food Fest's Natural Products Display Area.

FILIPINO food and beverage makers appear to have acquired the capability to be effective players in the international market as indicated by the attendance in the recent Asian Ethnic Food Fest at the World Trade Center.

Participant Figaro Coffee Company, for instance, displayed its export packs of Barako Connoisseur and Barako Gourmet. The company, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary, has adopted the "global brand, local touch" marketing strategy to make its mark in both local and overseas markets.

Barako Connoiseur is 100 percent pure Barako while the Barako Gourmet is a blend of Arabica and Barako.

Other Figaro products on display were Miarayon (referring to a peaceful Talaandig cultural community in the mountains of Bukidnon) Arabica Coffee.

A bubbly new year

MAY Sparkling Grape Juice—champagne-like drink without the alcohol content

IT'S a yearly tradition to welcome the new year with a bottle of champagne. This year, you have been tasked to host your annual party, and suddenly you realize that not all your friends are into drinking alcoholic beverages. So you take it upon yourself to make each and everyone enjoy the party without letting anyone feel left out.

A great solution is to introduce a drink that resembles champagne without the alcohol content. A good example is May Sparkling Grape Juices.

The pop of the cork, stream of mouth-filling bubbles and fresh fruity flavor are the champagne-like experiences you can have with May Sparkling Grape Juices. Served best when chilled, May Sparkling Grape Juices are refreshing non-alcoholic drinks made from specially selected grapes. A product of Belgium, this sparkling drink is ideal for parties and picnics because of its flavorsome alcohol-free characteristics.

Add zip to your Christmas

IT'S that time of the year when *lechon*, *queso de bola* and Christmas hams make their way to the Christmas dinner table.

You grew up with this same old tradition, and you feel it's about time to add a twist to your annual family gathering.

What better way to add zip to your Christmas than to splash out some wine. Franzia, America's best-selling wine, is the perfect choice for the holidays. With over three million glasses drank everyday in the US, Franzia is the best choice for those raring for a taste of California wines. More than its taste, Franzia wines are kept in unique winetap packages that keep the wine fresh and chilled for a long period of time. Nevertheless, while your nieces and nephews are busy running around the house, you need not worry that they'll break the wine because your wine choice is kept in economical and convenient shatter-proof containers.

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WINTER MELON CHICKEN
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CHICKEN & CORN

Start 'media noche' with Chinese soup

START your *media noche* with a serving of any of Campbell's Oriental Treats, authentic Chinese soups to warm you up this chilly season.

Campbell offers delicious traditional Chinese soups to make Christmas meals extra special. Its Oriental treats include Corn Seafood, Wintermelon Chicken, Mushroom Scallop and Seafood, Chicken and Corn as well as Szechuan hot and sour.

Corn Seafood Soup contains a generous amount of young golden corn kernels, fleshy shrimps and crab-flavored filaments.

Wintermmelon Chicken has diced wintermelon, chicken and mushrooms while Mushroom, Scallop and Seafood Soup has chunks of mushroom, scallops and seafood.

Szechuan Hot and Sour Soup is loaded with fragrant shiitake mushrooms, crunchy black fungi or wood ears, succulent bamboo shoots and beancurd while Chicken and Corn Soup has sweet corn and savory chicken.

HAM VARIATIONS

CDO-Foodsphere Inc. offers five variants of the traditional Christmas ham at reasonable prices. The CDO Holiday Ham is boneless and seasoned with herbs and spices. The round-shaped *hamon de bola* has a Spanish flavor and is sweet and spicy. American-style square ham is glazed and topped with a rich coating of pineapple jelly. The bone-in-ham is cooked in the old Chinese tradition. Call 2941111.

cdo
Holiday
HAM

This café is a 'chick' . . .

From page E1

Makati Medical Center and Pancake Connection in the PLDT building.

In the Bola version, the shreds were strewn on top of a mound of rice that had been lightly tossed in *adobo* sauce. Café Bola also gives you the option of having your shredded *adobo* as a topping on salad, or in a sandwich. In each instance, it is paired with fried *kesong puti*—which for me is another star of the Filipino breakfast.

Now, the squid in black ink is a dish I wouldn't normally order because I find it kind of a corny Pinoy house food—not to mention the problem of black lips.

However, my lunchmate was a visiting *balikbayan* from New York, and she chose this dish among all others because she said this was exactly the kind of dish she would never go through the trouble of preparing in her tiny studio.

"Can you imagine me ripping the little ink sacks out of squids in my apartment?" she said.

Unlike the *adobo*, the squid was drenched in a thick black sauce which permeated halfway down the rice mound. The jet-black dish was made to look appetizing, however, with the addition of a lot of crunchy golden bits of garlic and even some toasted garlic skin on top for effect (referred to as garlic hay).

I had a bite of the squid. I must say it was way better than the version of my *kusinera* because the squid was very tender.

Light options

For the ladies in the house who preferred a light lunch, the menu had a lot of tasty and intriguing yet light options.

For non-meat eaters (haven't you noticed their numbers are growing?), there were various pastas that featured either the little white fish called *dulong*, salty *danggit* crackle or the sinful *aligue*.

My personal pasta favorite is not a healthy option, however. It's the penne with chorizo parmesan cream.

The sandwich options are also quite wide and very original. A word of warning, though. On a recent trip to Bola, I was dead-set on eating a cheese sandwich and I was pleased to find four options. Aside from the *adobo* and *kesong puti* variant, there was a mozzarella tomato and basil (which the menu said was a "must-try"), a pepper jelly and cream cheese option and a cheese pimiento.

My adventurous streak was demanding I go with the pepper jelly, but the safer side of me said I should obey the menu. I erred on the side of conservatism and later regretted that move when I was presented with a tiny hotdog bun with a strip of cheese and two little discs of tomato—a very bland and unexciting combination.

That meal was saved, however, by the flourless chocolate cake. Sitting on a cloud of light cream, this cake is light as a feather yet gives a substantial chocolate hit. This chocolate cake is *the* little black dress of Café Bola—a must-have for all women.

The *kesong puti* cheesecake with some kind of jam or preserve on top is also noteworthy, if a little dense and salty. I would probably liken this more to a sturdy pair of cargo pants.

If neither appeals to you, there are loads of interesting options on the dessert menu—which probably is another big draw for the ladies.

Zarap! Quick guide to Café Bola

Cuisine: Filipino

Suitable for: Lunch with officemates or friends;

Service: Good

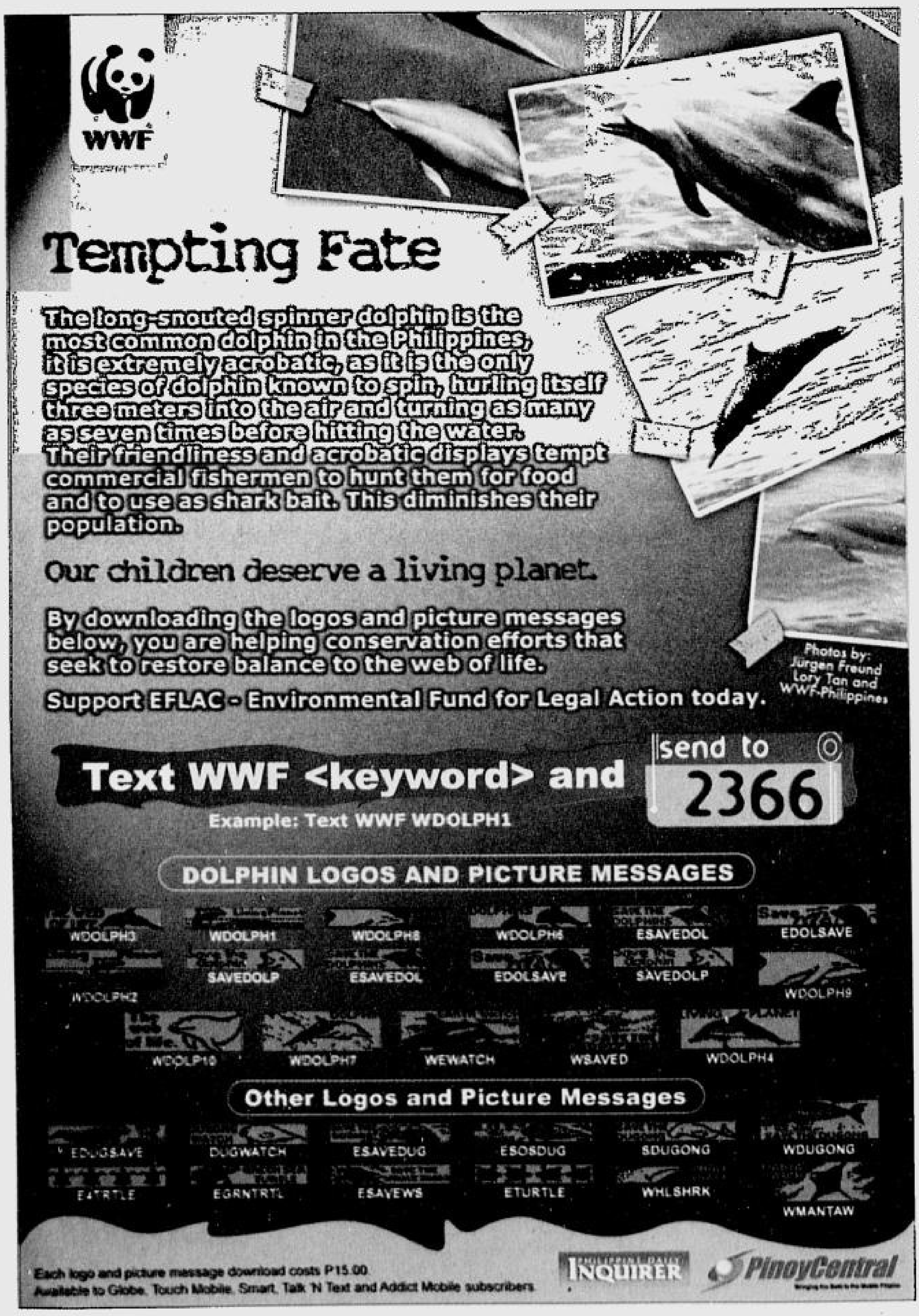
Cost: PP (out of five)

Location: 2/F, Greenbelt 3, Makati City; Araneta Coliseum, Cubao

Overall Z! Rating: ZZZZ! (out of five)

Handicap access: Yes, via ramps in Greenbelt mall

ADOBO flakes with egg on rice


WWF
Tempting Fate
The long-snouted spinner dolphin is the most common dolphin in the Philippines, it is extremely acrobatic, as it is the only species of dolphin known to spin, hurling itself three meters into the air and turning as many as seven times before hitting the water. Their friendliness and acrobatic displays tempt commercial fishermen to hunt them for food and to use as shark bait. This diminishes their population.
Our children deserve a living planet.
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Celebrate the holidays with mouth-watering feasts

DINING OUT

EDSA Shangri-La Manila's Nishiki features tempura, rock lobster, marinated salmon sashimi for lunch and dinner today, Dec. 31 and Jan. 1. Summer Palace serves festival set menus which include Peking duck, cold prawn salad, shark's fin, fried crab, baked king prawns, garoupa and suckling pig, steamed lapu-lapu until Jan. 1. Have an Italian lunch buffet at Paparazzi today, Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 features poached sea bass, rack of lamb, goose liver terrine and oven-baked baby quail. Lobby Lounge offers *kakanin* today and Jan. 1, 3-6 p.m. Call 6347373 and 6338888.

HOLIDAY INN Galleria Manila's Raphael Café offers Christmas Day lunch buffet from 11 a.m.-2 p.m., New Year's Eve dinner buffet, 6-10 p.m., and New Year's Day lunch, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Call 6337111.

THE WESTIN Philippine Plaza celebrates the holidays with a spread of Yuletide treats. Café Plaza's Christmas lunch and dinner buffets today feature green salads, appetizers, oysters, rock lobsters, prawns, Christmas ham, turkey, *pritong lechon*, fresh fruits, ice cream and cakes. Poolside Barbecue offers grilled items. The Longest New Year's Eve Buffet on Dec. 31 combines three buffets for the price of one. Available at Café Plaza, Alfiere and China Sea. Call 5515555.

HOTEL Pontefino offers a dinner buffet until Dec. 30 to be capped by a New Year's Eve Mad Hat Party, a cocktail buffet, concert by the poolside with the Q & A band. On Jan. 1, chestnuts will be roasting on an open fire by the poolside for the New Year's Day family brunch buffet. Call 4372103, 4211710 or 4212059.

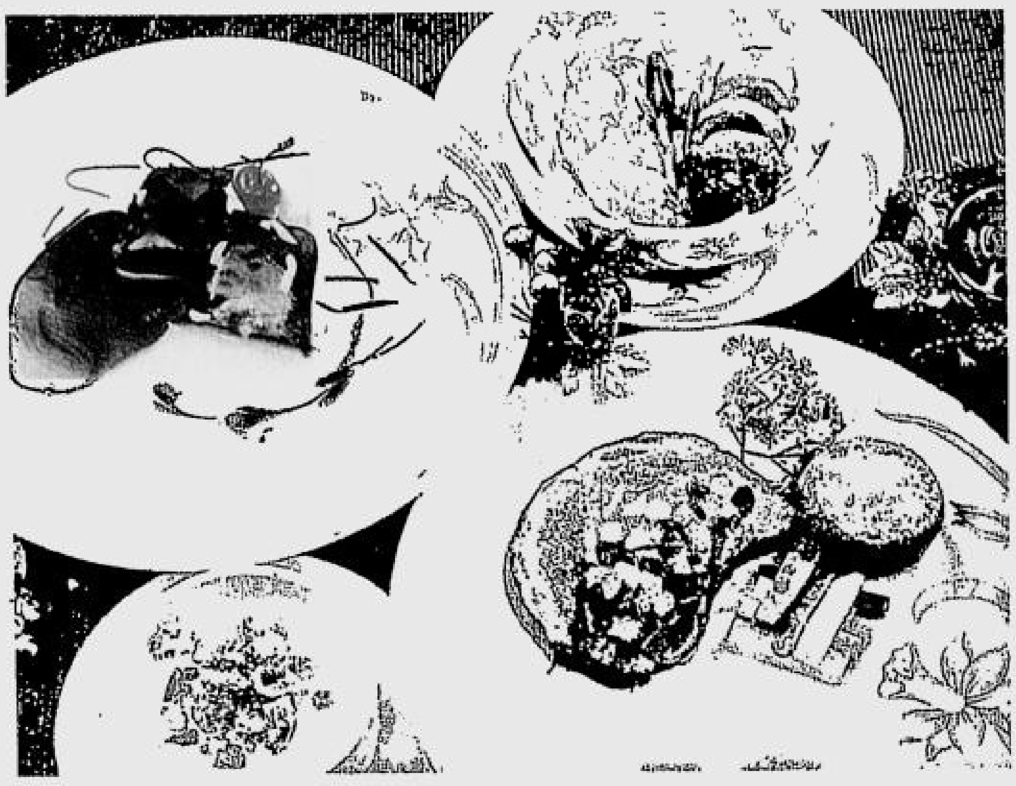
CINNABON offers Cinnabon Express packs in beautifully designed Christmas boxes. You also get a 50-percent discount on the second box for every two express packs that you purchase. Cinnabon is located in Power Plant Mall, Rockwell Center, Makati; Robinsons Place Manila; Shell C5-Taguig; Shell-Magallanes; Shell Travel Plaza-South Luzon; Shell South Luzon-Select; Shell Travel Plaza-North Luzon; Shell North Luzon-Select; SM Megamall; The Podium; Caltex-Ortigas Avenue; San Miguel East Wing of Robinsons Galleria and Greenhills Shopping Center.

THE HERITAGE Hotel Manila's Restaurant Riviera features a dinner buffet on New Year's Eve consisting of rib eye, Singapore style suckling pig and roast duck, smoked salmon, rack of lamb. These treats are also offered on New Year's Day for lunch and dinner. Call 8548888.

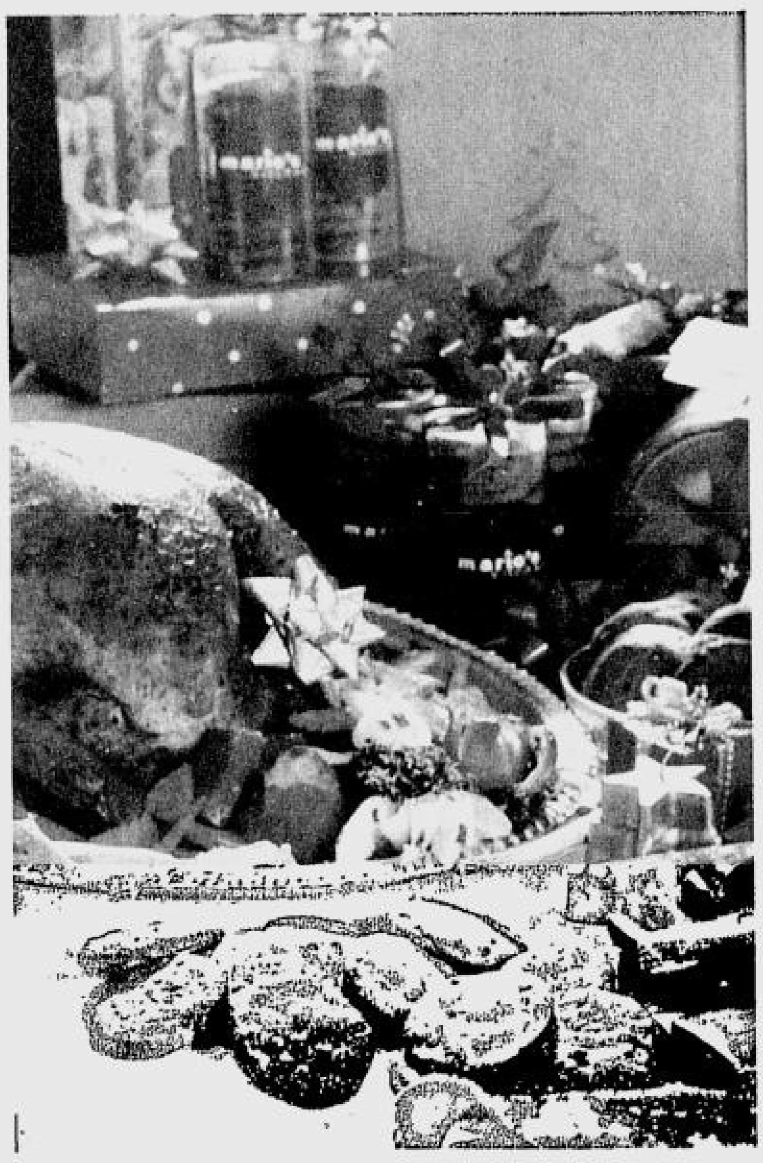
MANILA Pavilion Hotel showcases Handaan sa Gitnang Luzon food festival until Dec. 27, lunch time, at Café Coquilla. The festival features cuisines from the provinces of Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac and Aurora. Call 5261212.

DAVID'S Teahouse at Virra Mall, Greenhills, offers 50 different kinds of sushi, which is available in wooden boxes.

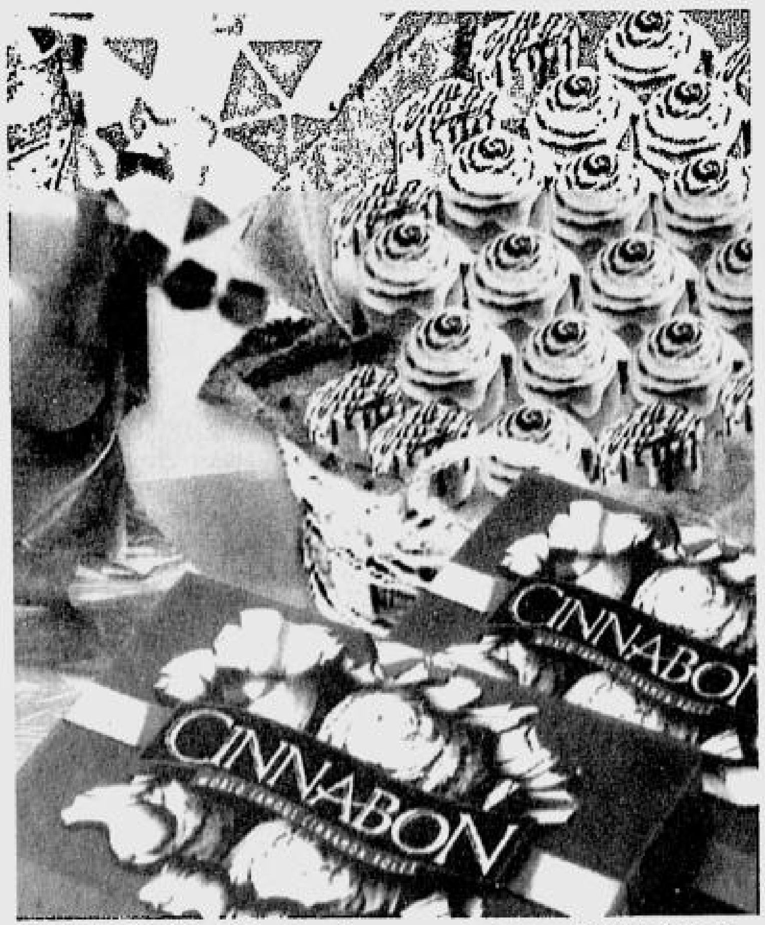
PALMS Country Club offers Christmas hampers filled with gourmet items, beverages, fruit cake, minced meat, ginger bread house and English Christmas pudding. These goodies are available until Jan. 2 at the lobby.



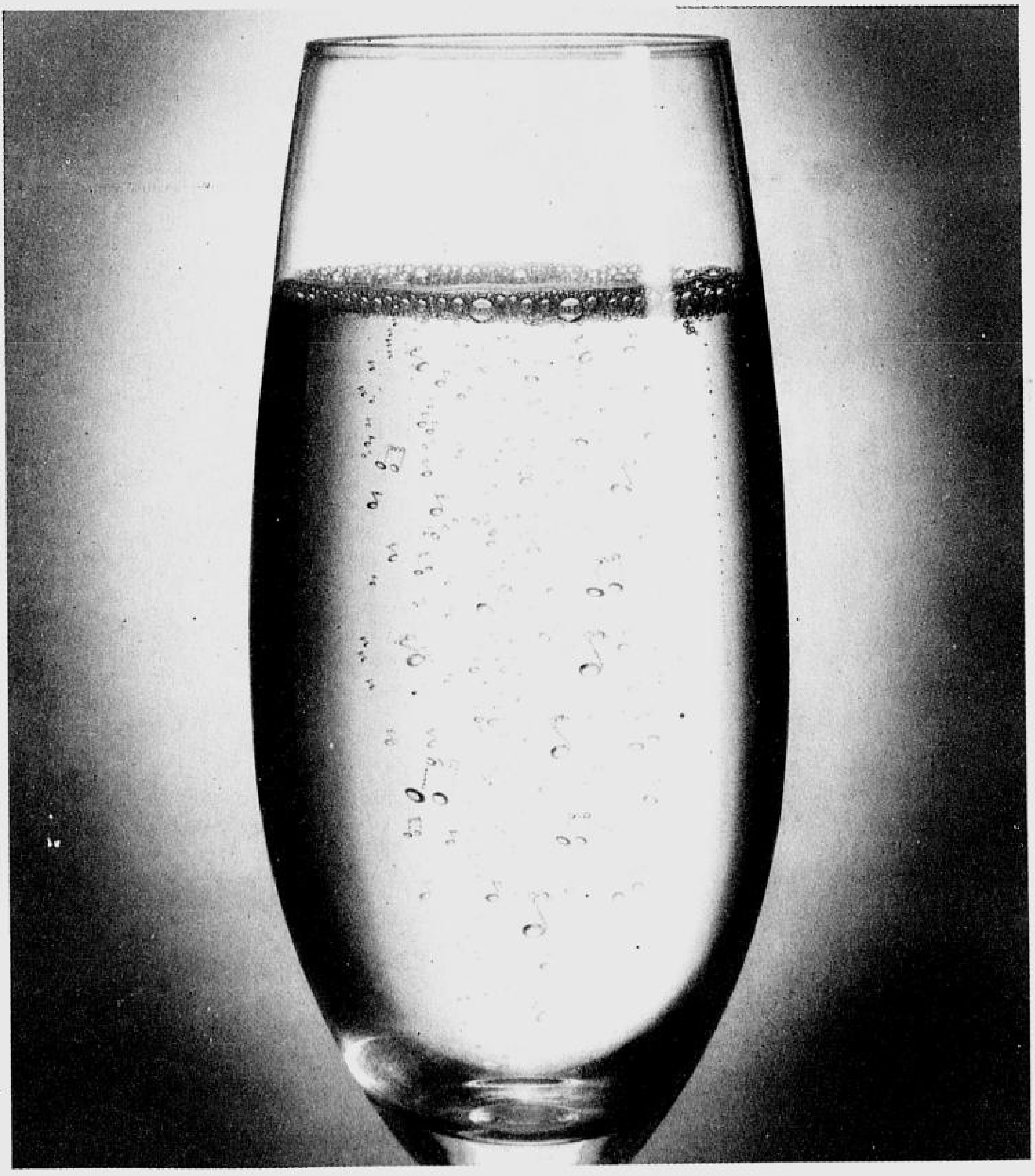
HOLIDAY flavors at the Holiday Inn Galleria Manila



MARIO'S Restaurant offers American holiday treats such as roasted turkey, fruit cakes and Food for the Gods. Mario's has branches in Quezon City, Ortigas, Baguio, Robinsons Galleria and Robinsons Ermita. Call 7240196.



CINNABON offers Cinnabon Express packs in beautifully designed Christmas boxes.



End the year on a high note.

This Christmas, enjoy the soul soothing symphonies of the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra with pop icon Kyla as The Concert at The Pen celebrates its 20th year. Likewise, treat yourself to your favorite Christmas Carols performed live at The Lobby by the internationally renowned Loboc Children's Choir. Then round out the year Peninsula style with our very own New Year's Eve Gala Ball and Dinner featuring the Nonoy Lopez Band, Hyperbeat, X.O.P. and Outbreak. These are just a few of the Peninsula traditions that will help you find true harmony this season.

THE PENINSULA
MANILA

20th Christmas Concert at The Pen (5:00-7:00 PM)
The Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Maestro Ruggero Barbieri
December 13

Stores Specialists, Inc.
Your World. Your Lifestyle.

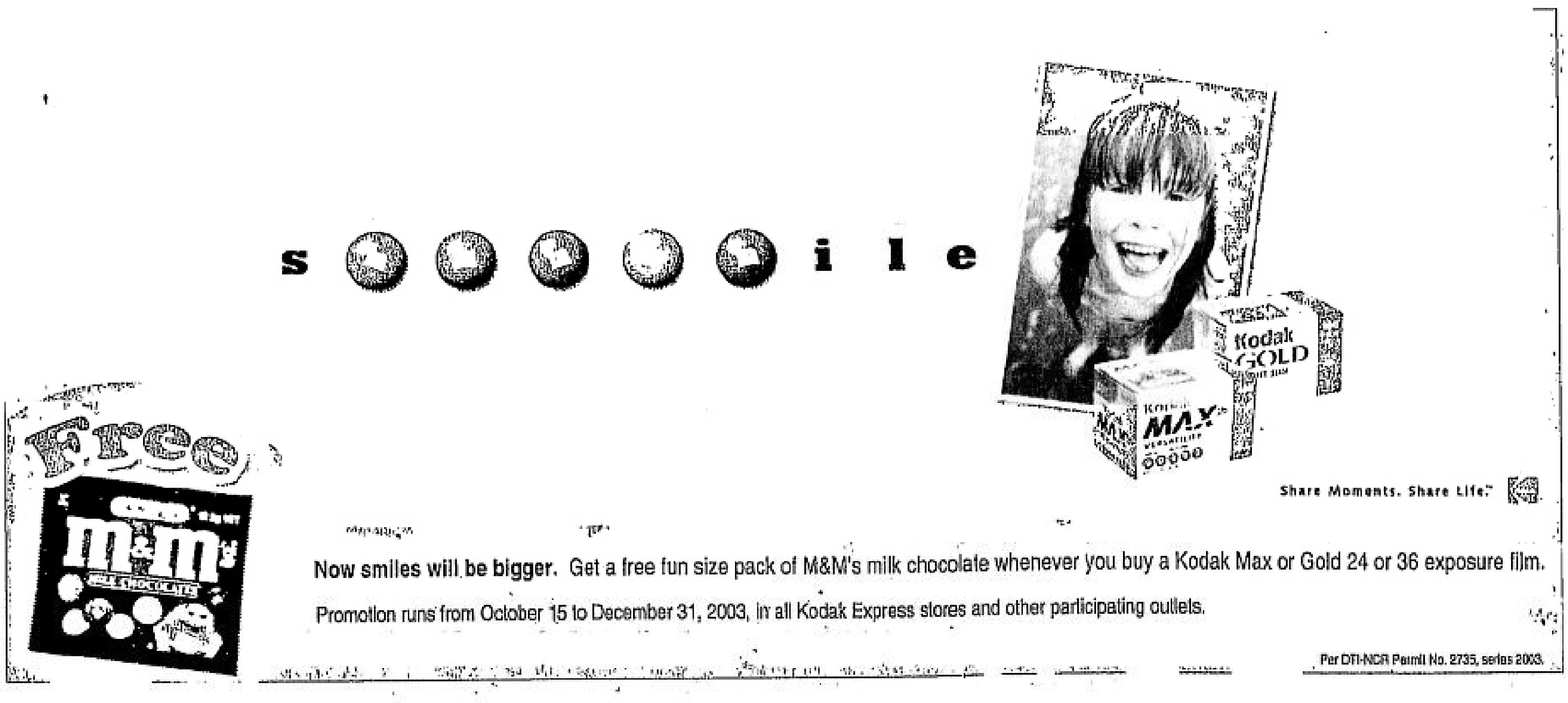
Caroling at The Lobby (6:30-7:15 PM)
Loboc Children's Choir
December 19

Coro Anima (6:30-7:15 PM)
December 20, 22 & 23

New Year's Eve Gala Ball and Dinner
Lobby Dinner Buffet (9:00 PM-12:00 MN)
Entertainment featuring Nonoy Lopez Band, Hyperbeat, X.O.P. and Outbreak.
(10:00 PM-4:00 AM)
P3,850 for adults
P2,375 for children 12 and below

Holiday Accommodations
Dec. 12, 2003 to Jan. 11, 2004
P4,250 per night*
Dec. 31, 2003
P6,500 per night*
**Prices are subject to 10% service charge and prevailing government tax.*

Corner of Ayala and Makati Avenues, 1226 Makati City, Metro Manila, Philippines • For inquiries or reservations, please call 887-2888, 812-3456 or fax us at 815-4825, 815-3402
Email: tpm@peninsula.com • Website: www.peninsula.com



Now smiles will be bigger. Get a free fun size pack of M&M's milk chocolate whenever you buy a Kodak Max or Gold 24 or 36 exposure film.

Promotion runs from October 15 to December 31, 2003, in all Kodak Express stores and other participating outlets.

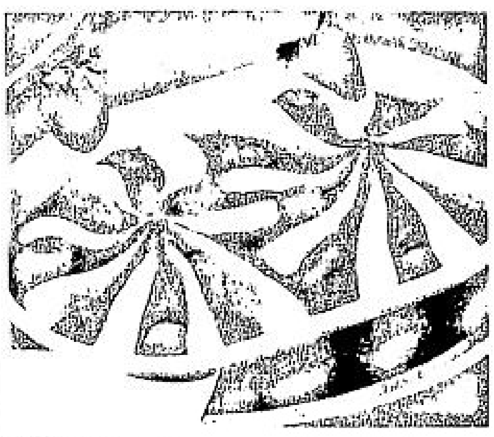
Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 2735, series 2003.

Ice cream with real fruit toppings

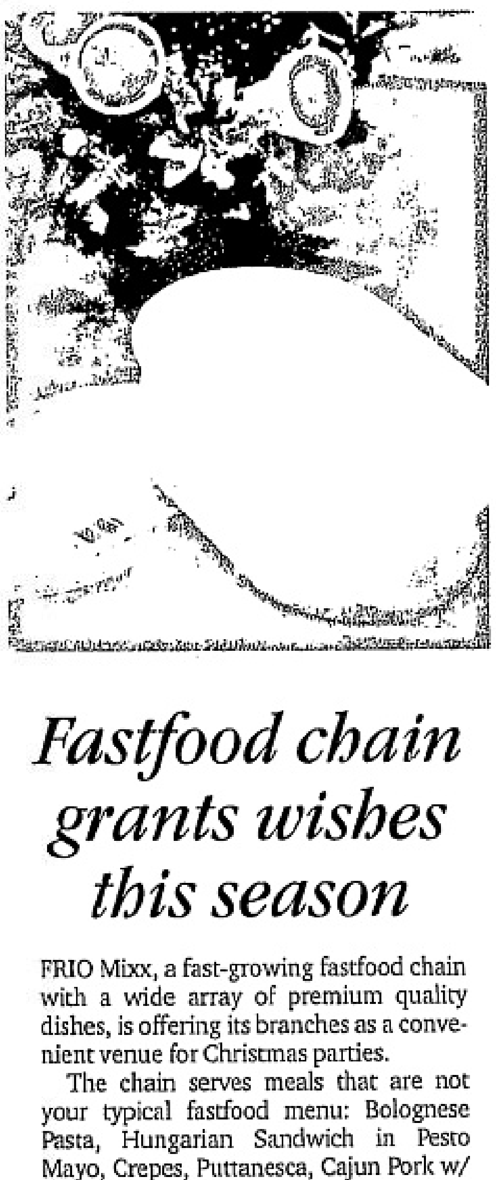
FAMILY bonding gains a special dimension when members find a reason to stay at the dinner table: a dessert they can't resist. And then as now, Selecta ice cream remains a favorite family dessert.

This Christmas, Selecta is offering the new Selecta Sundae with Real Fruit Toppings. Choices include strawberry, mango, blueberry and fudge brownie toppings, which the family can relish with creamy vanilla-based ice cream. At P99, this is a double treat of fruit and ice cream in one generous helping.

Selecta Sundaes with Real Fruit Toppings are available at groceries and supermarkets.



SELECTA Sundaes come with real fruit toppings such as blueberry, strawberry (above) or mango (below). At P99, this is a great family treat in one generous helping.



Fastfood chain grants wishes this season

FRIO Mixx, a fast-growing fastfood chain with a wide array of premium quality dishes, is offering its branches as a convenient venue for Christmas parties.

The chain serves meals that are not your typical fastfood menu: Bolognese Pasta, Hungarian Sandwich in Pesto Mayo, Crepes, Puttanesca, Cajun Pork w/ Sour Cream, Salpicao, Korean Beef, Lengua, and such Filipino favorites as Palabok, Kaldereta, Kare-Kare and Beef Tapa.

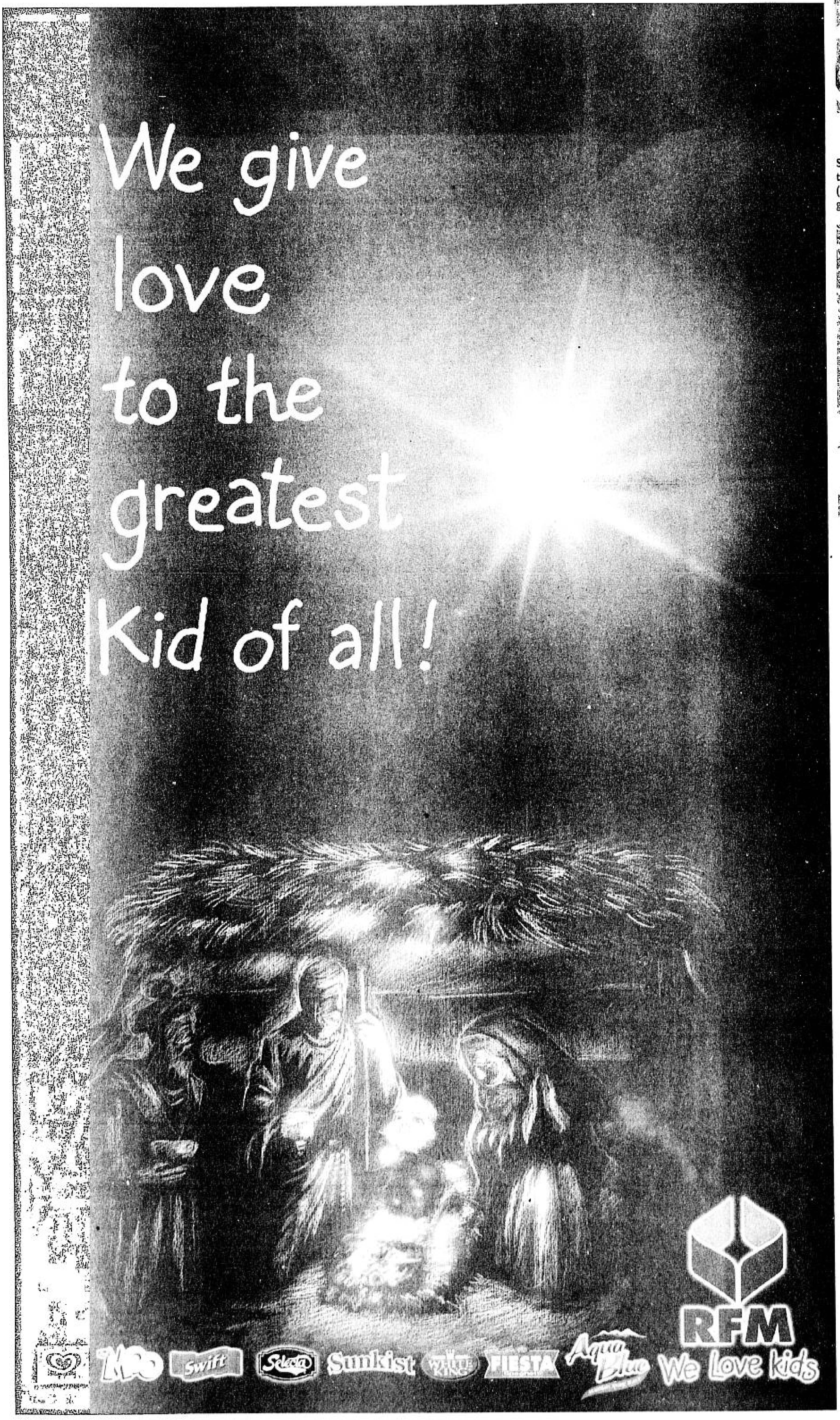
This season, Frio Mixx is also launching a "Mag-wish sa Frio" campaign. Every branch of Frio Mixx will have a small box where anyone can drop a letter containing his or her wish. The letter must indicate the name of the sender, address, contact particulars. It may be for a personal wish or a wish for a certain indigent individual or organization. You may also mail your wish to 519-A N. S. Amoranto St., Sta. Mesa Heights, Quezon City.

Every month starting this December, Frio Mixx will grant the wish of one letter sender.

Frio Mixx branches are located at Shangri-la Plaza, SM Fairview, SM Lucena, SM Marilao, SM Pampanga, SM Bicutan, Robinsons Metro East, Robinsons Novaliches, Robinsons Lipa, Robinsons Sta. Rosa, Robinsons-Dasmarinas Cavite, Ali Mall, Tutuban Mall, Retiro QC, BF Resort Las Pinas, Leon Guinto Manila, Pearl Drive Ortigas Center, Dapitan UST, Recto Corner Mendiola, Grace Village QC, Don Antonio QC, Fatima Mac Arthur, Moonwalk Paranaque, Biñan Laguna, U.N. Avenue, Sta. Lucia Mall, Imus Cavite, Festival Mall and Starmall.

Call 3634838 or e-mail marqint@surfshop.net.ph

FRIO Mixx's tasty spaghetti



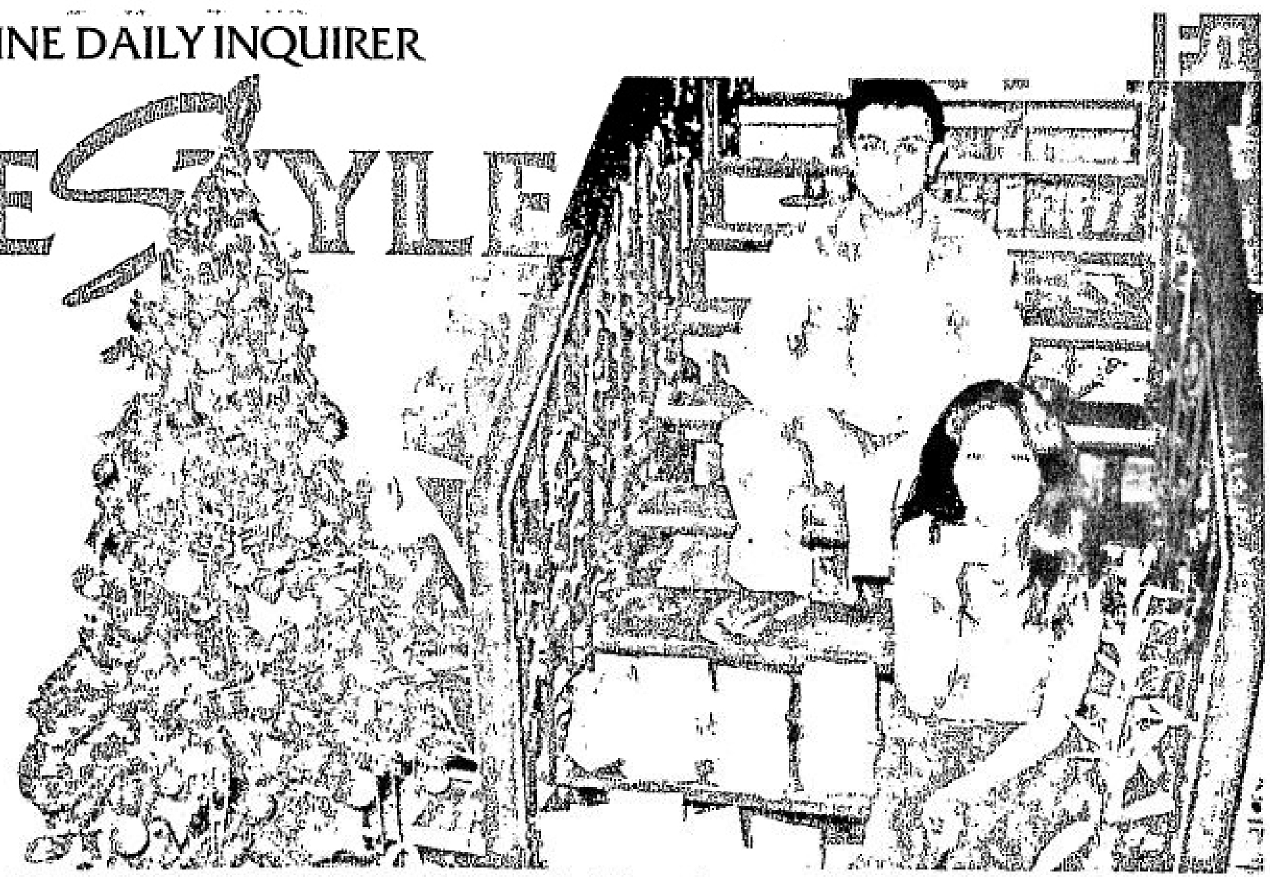
For feedback, text us at (0919) 880-3354 or (0916) 200-1160
or e-mail us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

LifeStyle

MALIGAYANG PASKO
AT MANIGONG BAGONG TAON!

Salamat sa inyong mga awitin
Bumalik ka dito sa araw ng Pasko
upang makuha ang aming regalo sa iyo

Here they come a-caroling



FOR A SONG. Paolo Jose, 20, and Carolyn Anna, 15, with bags of treats—muffin, instant noodles, juice and lollipop—ready for neighborhood kids who will come singing carols. Carolyn is holding stub sample.

Instead of spare change, young carolers get stubs that they can exchange for gift bags come Christmas Day

By Josefina Andrea R. Cantiller

THE HOLIDAYS in my childhood were signaled by Christmas carols sung by the neighborhood kids outside our door. Whenever I heard the first notes, it was as if a light inside me was switched on. It was a time of anticipation of greater things to come!

But as my world became a little less innocent, I began to hear the off-key strains of song. The musical notes would, in my cynical, imaginative mind, transformed into peso signs! Giving spare change to the urchins was becoming a mindless activity. It was something that said "You're a nuisance and here's something to get rid of you." The coins also seemed to say, "Your singing is not worth it!" So kids would just rush through a poorly performed song and after a phrase or two, would break into. "*Namamasko po!*" Night after night you were punished by discordant singing and you got back at them with the measly coins.

Then I became a mother! Suddenly, I wanted to bring back and preserve for my children the traditions I enjoyed as a child. But how could I recover something that seemed to be lost? How to bring back the songs sung from the children's hearts?

Thus began one of our "new" family traditions. Some eight years ago, instead of spare change, my children and I started giving stubs to the neighborhood children who sang at our door. (Each stub said, "*Salamat sa inyong awitin. Bumalik ka dito sa araw ng Pasko.*") These they could redeem for gift bags come Christmas Eve.

Each caroler could only get one gift bag so any extra stubs they might have earned (by coming back every night to sing a carol, thinking perhaps that the next night would be different and would yield cash) could be shared with their siblings or friends.

Every year my children, now 20 and 15, help in decorating and packing the bags. When the carolers come, it is their task to give the stubs and explain what they are for. Come Christmas, the gifts are given with reminders about the reasons for celebrating and a request for prayers.

The neighborhood kids seem to like it as they come back year after year. I don't know, but the singing sounds better, too. Could it be the gift bags? Or is it because we go out and listen to their songs when they come at our door? Is Christmas back at our doorsteps?

Josefina Andrea R. Cantiller, 47, a psychology professor at the University of the Philippines, has won a Noche Buena shopping spree worth P10,000 at Rustan's Supermarket

TAKING the trouble and the time to prepare gift bags for young carolers

Give an MMS this Christmas.

Hapi holiBABES!!!

Show 'em all what they're missin' through MMS messaging.

Send Images, Sound Clips and Video Streams through your Addict Mobile phone for just P5 per MMS sent! So start sending those Christmas cheers before the season loses steam.

1. AFTER CAPTURING AN IMAGE WITH YOUR MOBILE CAMERA, CLICK ON THE INBOX ICON AND CREATE A NEW MMS MESSAGE.

2. SELECT THE IMAGE YOU WISH TO FORWARD PLUS THE RECEPIENT'S MOBILE NUMBER.

3. CLICK SEND.

Get a chance to WIN:
1 of 4 ADDICT MINI COOPERS
or 1 of 2 ADDICT DUCATI SUPERBIKES
2 MMS DOWNLOADS or MESSAGES SENT = 1 RAFFLE ENTRY

The more raffle entries = The more chances of winning

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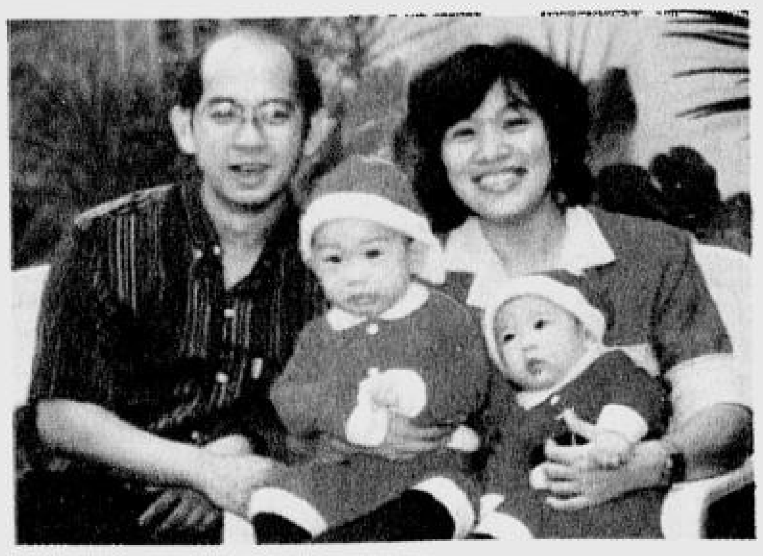
THE VESAGAS THROUGH THE YEARS....Cozy in an armchair with their first baby, 1989



WITH the boys in Santa outfits, 1990

MOST un-Christmas picture of all but who cares, the family is complete because Dad came home from Singapore, 1991

BY the poinset

For this family, Christmas begin

Loved ones kept tab of how their family was growing through the photographs they took and sent out every year at Yuletide

EVERYONE in red except for their darling daughter, who is in green, 2003

By Connie C. Vesagas, MD

OUR family's Christmas tradition occurs a month before Christmas on my birthday, Nov. 26.

When we got married in 1988, my husband and I created handmade Christmas cards out of silkscreen. It was hard work but we enjoyed it.

Our first son was born in 1989, and we took a picture of ourselves, cramped in an armchair with our son in his Christmas bib and socks. This we did on my birthday, right after Mass. We brought the picture to the photo shop and had Christmas cards made and sent them to relatives and friends.

Another son followed in 1990, and we dressed our sons in Santa outfits for that picture.

I had a dilemma in 1991 because my husband was in Singapore for a year. I thought I could take a picture of myself and our sons with his photograph beside us. But he surprised me and arrived the day before my birthday.

Our daughter followed in 1994, and that year we used two rolls of film. She kept crawling toward the camera.

Another son followed in 1996, and taking pictures was getting difficult—after all, we had four children.

Our youngest was born in 2000. We were now seven!

The next year, I neglected to measure our youngest son's feet. His shoes were tight, and in the photograph he ended up wearing just

Spreading Christmas joy through 'texting'

By Christopher Arcelius I. Calata

I'M A Christmas person and I look forward to every Christmas with as much excitement as children do. My Christmas season begins on the 16th of September of every year when the 100-day countdown to Christmas Day commences.

For 100 days at exactly the same time every morning, I send old and new friends, cousins, colleagues, even "textmates" a daily dose of Christmas thoughts, ideas, tips and suggestions on how to make every Christmas truly special—through the ever-powerful short messaging service, more popularly known as "texting."

The idea began in 2000 after I read the "Little Book of Christmas Joy" and I asked myself what I could do to spread the holiday spirit every year. It is heartwarming to know that in the four Christmas seasons including this year, the recipients (30 of them now) have become more excited and, consequently, they are spreading the excitement and joy as well to their own friends!

Whenever I had not sent the countdown message by 9 a.m., someone would give me a miss call or text me, "DB4!"—short for "days before." I now have my own version of pyramiding every year!

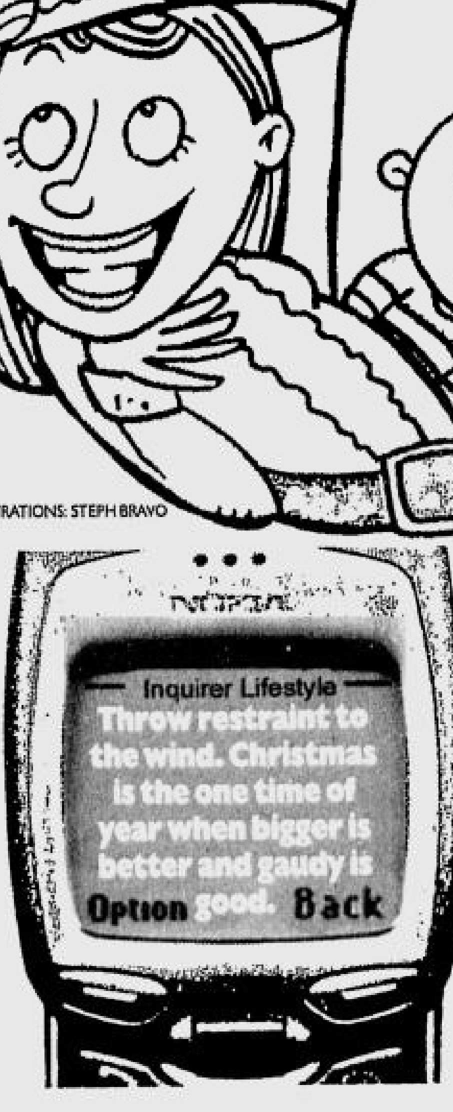
From decorating tips to budgeting to holiday planning and spending to gift suggestions and ways to open up the heart on Christmas and always, my Christmas tradition, whether individually or with my family and friends, is found in these 100 messages I take to heart and which we all share.

Hopefully, in the Christmases to come, more and more and more people will be excited with Christmas and rediscover the real magic and the true joy it brings to the child within us! I hope we all do our share.

Here's a sampling from my 100-days-to-Christmas cheers:

Remember the three rules of reducing holiday hassles: 1. Plan ahead; 2. Begin early; 3. Keep it simple.

ILLUSTRATIONS: STEPH BRAVO



Inquirer Lifestyle
Throw restraint to the wind. Christmas is the one time of year when bigger is better and gaudy is good.

Start looking for gifts now when Christmas bazaars are held just everywhere. Buy one each week as this will most likely not hurt your pocket.

Christmas is the season for time-honored traditions. Do not attempt major changes.

To keep you in the holiday spirit, play Christmas music at your home, at the office or in your car.

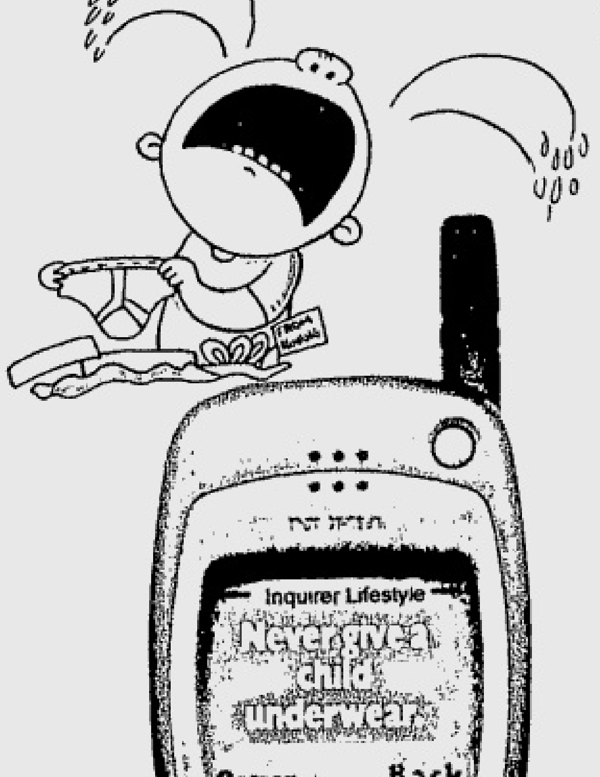
Add a new Christmas cassette or CD to your music collection every year.

The Parol Tagalog and the Pampanga Lantern are the ultimate unique Philippine Christmas symbols. Make an effort to have one displayed prominently in your house window yearly.

Don't let anything ruin your holiday spirit.

Don't try to do everything yourself. Remember, even Santa needs helpers.

If you don't have the belen, make an effort to have one, even if it's only the Holy Family.



Inquirer Lifestyle
Never give a child underwear.

tias with new baby girl, 1994

ON THE staircase, with their newborn third son, 1996

ALL dressed up in formal wear, 2001

s with a pose that refreshes

shoes, no socks.

By 2002, our children were pros. After all photos were taken, our two younger sons pleaded to go somewhere—they were garbed in barongs, and going someplace seemed a logical thing to do. It took a lot of convincing that they were dressed and really had nowhere to go.

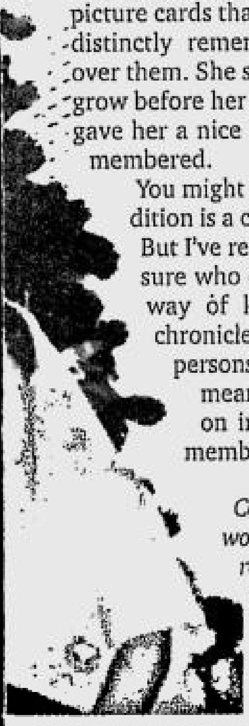
It is 2003, the 15th year of our family Christmas tradition. We now use a digital camera and a computer, creating the design of the caption and adding our name to the card. We still go to the photo shop to have the cards made.

At home, we have enlargements of the last four Christmas pictures displayed. The rest is tucked away in albums.

Years ago, I visited a relative in another country. I went through her photo albums dutifully as she invited me to do so. To my surprise, she had compiled the Christmas picture cards that I had sent over the years. I distinctly remember her delight in going over them. She said it was just like seeing us grow before her eyes. And she said it always gave her a nice feeling to know she was remembered.

You might think that our Christmas tradition is a conceited way of showing off. But I've realized that to those you treasure who cannot be with you, this is a way of keeping in touch. A photo chronicles the love that goes on in the persons' lives. Sending our photo meant sending the love that goes on in my family to those we remember, specially on Christmas.

Connie C. Vesagas, 44, a surgeon, won an overnight stay in a deluxe room at the Westin Philippine Plaza and dinner for her family at Cafe Plaza's longest buffet.



BRIGHT and cheery under the Christmas tree, 1998

ry at least one new recipe and ne new decorating idea every ear.

eep money in individual nvelopes to give pontaneously when you're ouched by the Christmas pirit.

ffer refreshments to hristmas carolers.

e nice to sales personnel. They re often wearier than you are.

hen you don't know what to ive, give a book.

ip someone who doesn't xpect it.

reate a special Christmas norning breakfast menu and erve it every year.

uy a big red candle for the lining table. Light it every night t dinner during the holidays nd feel the warmth and spirit f Christmas.

o caroling!

SPREADING/ F4

CHIVAS REGAL
Lay's
Ruffles
Doritos
Post-Christmas Sale!

Ang Lakas Ng Piso!
P49 to US$1
Plus! Peso Power Pamaskong Discounts
December 26-28, 2003 only
•$5 discount on minimum $65 purchase of Perfumes and Cosmetics items.
•$5 discount on purchases of any 3 pasalubong bags of Chocolates.
•$10 discount on minimum $100 supermarket purchases.
•15% discount on Adidas and Silhouette Sunglasses.
•10% discount on Omega, Gucci, Christian Dior, Rolex and Swatch watches.
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Under RA 9174, Balikbayans and OFWs arriving between Nov. 15 and Jan. 15 can shop within 30 days from date of arrival.
Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 3877 Series of 2003

Christmas on a budget

(Editor's Note: We couldn't pass up this entry for its unpretentiousness and for being about a tradition that runs counter to the mad materialism that has increasingly possessed the Christmas season. It gets a special prize. The sender wins INQUIRER *souvenir items consisting of umbrella, cap, mug and pen.)*

By Daphne Perez

WHEN you look into your wallet on a cold December morning and all you have is a P500 bill, won't you be thankful that you have it at all?

A P500 bill is all that I spend for this special time of the year. This is my fifth year to practice this tradition at Christmastime.

Let me tell you how P500 complete my Christmas.

I take my cousins, whose ages range from 7 to 12, to our town plaza in the daytime of Dec. 24 and with P50 worth of 25-centavo coins, we play the *itsa-itsa* where you shoot the coin into small squares painted in a rectangular board. Prizes at stake are a big plastic washbasin, Ritchie orange juice in litro bottles or a jackpot prize of P200! But we always settle for a plastic washbasin and, believe me, we have accumulated 13 wash basins in just four Christmas! We top the day with an Octopus or Ferris Wheel ride!

At 9 p.m., I go to my aunts and uncles to deliver a personalized Christmas card for each of them and see to it that I only spend P250 from my Christmas money. Since we live a few blocks away from each other, distributing the cards is trouble-free.

At midnight of Dec. 24, I give my presents to my Nanay, my Tatay and my brother. For my Nanay, I buy something that she can use at school (she's a schoolteacher)—pencil case, plastic envelope for her lesson plan, stapler. Last year I gave her a "best mom" paperweight and made her burst into tears.

I have given my Tatay a mug for four straight years because he always starts the day with coffee but this year, I'm giving him a cassette tape with the "Love Story" track ("Where do I begin?/To tell love story and how great a love can be..."). We used to sing this song every morning when I accompanied him on his daily exercise (he is recovering from a mild stroke). He taught me this song when I was still in grade school.

As for my brother, I buy second-hand books (he's a bookworm) that cost P15 to P50. Last week, he told me about this bookstore that sells very cheap books and gave me the title of a certain book because he has assumed I'd give him another book as a present this Christmas which of course I will.

Since my *lolos* and *lolas* are deceased, I go to the cemetery in the morning of Dec. 25 and offer prayers for them and for all my loved ones who have passed away.

As for friends, a kiss on the cheek will do for now though of course this will change once I am finished with school and earning money of my own.

So who says you have to spend a large sum of money to complete your Christmas?

Spreading Christmas joy . . .

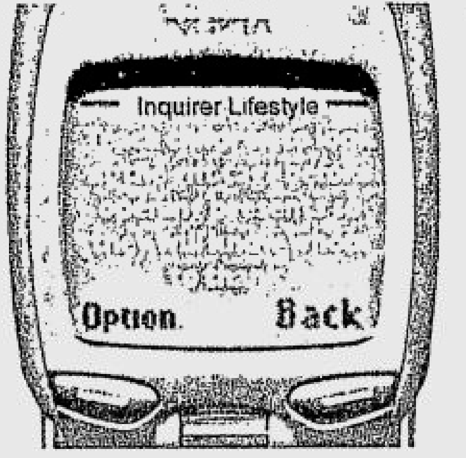
From page F3

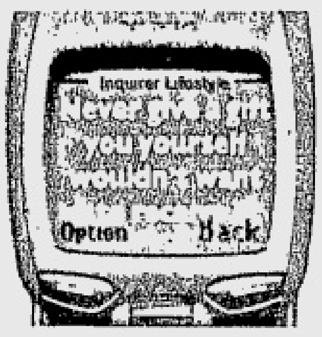
On Christmas Eve, after the Noche Buena, light a candle and say a prayer for world peace before going to bed.

Open your Christmas presents on Christmas morning with your favorite Christmas music playing in the background.

Organize a progressive holiday dinner with your friends, relatives or neighborhood. Have appetizers at one home, the main course at another, and dessert at a third.

Thank You NINANG!





Tell the children about Christmas when you were their age.

Throughout the holiday season, give your family the gift of sweet disposition.

Be others-centered instead of self-centered. A person wrapped up in himself makes a very small package.

Give someone who has discouraged, the gift of encouragement.

Give gifts with no strings attached.

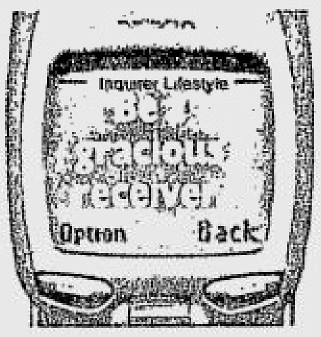
If you're feeling harried, go to a church, sit in the sanctuary, and reflect on the real meaning of Christmas. And you'll leave feeling more peaceful.

Never ever refuse a holiday dessert.

Don't forget whose birthday we are celebrating.

Christopher Arcelius I. Calata, 28, a civil engineer with Sysco Construction Group, has won P3,000 worth of call cards. His monthly mobile phone bill from September to December average P3,000.

He marks the 100-day countdown with a message a day to his family and friends, who in turn pass it on—and, no, he doesn't work for Globe, Smart or Sun



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[illegible] YULETIDE DEALS ON NOKIA MMS PHONES

Individual application requirements for new subscribers:

Any of the following:
• Unexpired Driver's License
• Unexpired Company ID
• Unexpired Locally Issued Major Credit Card
• New/Photo/Laminated SSS
• New/Photo/Laminated TIN Card
• Unexpired PRC ID
• Unexpired IBP ID
• Unexpired Photo Membership ID from top Sports and Country Clubs accredited by SMART
• Unexpired Photo/Laminated Firearms License Card
• Senior Citizen ID with Photo
• Passport and ACR (Alien Certificate of Registration) for Foreign Individuals.

Should be the latest paid billing statement, original copy preferred. Photocopy is acceptable.

Any of the following:
• Utility Bills
• Major Credit Card Bills
• Cable Subscription Bills
• Internet Provider Bills

Any of the following:
• Latest Income Tax Return (ITR) or Certificate of Employment with Salary Certification
• Bank Statement or Passbook or Bank Certification
• Credit Card Billing Statement with Credit Limit Information

Promo period is from November [illegible] to December [illegible], 2003.

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